

## MY ADVENTURE IN SEARCH OF GARIBALDI.

I HAD never seen Italy, its palaces and picture galleries, and all the other glorious sights which Mr. Murray kindly catalogues in red, and Mr. Coghlan in blue. So I crossed Mount Cenia, and went gradually southward from city to city, allowing myself just time to rush about the chief towns, with a guidebook in my hand, and a Cicerone at my heels, and to get a satisfactory stare at the lions, whether of marble or bronze, or painted canvas, or mouldering and mossy stone.

Rome, I confess, although it was the unhealthy vintage season, when the Campagna is a nest of fevers, and timid folks feel the malaria in every hot puff of wind that blows over the brown plain,—Rome, I confess, detained me too long. I could not get away; I could not get through my round of sight-seeing, though I worked like a horse in a mill, plodding through miles of pictures and acres of statuary, and consuming much of the time I meant to devote to martial proceedings. In spite of my own hurry, and although I wore out and expended in my service two of the stoutest *laquais de place* in the Eternal City, I spent ten days in Rome. But when I started, I could not blame myself for thus lingering. I had little prospect of seeing Rome again for many a long day. My aunt's legacy, on the strength of which I became a voyager, was waxing less and less, and I had no particular chance of another bequest; so I was right to make hay while the sun shone, and see all I could while my purse was still fairly replete.

Off I went at last in the Naples estafette, with a team of half-wild Roman horses, screaming and biting each other, and tearing along the dusty roads in proper courier style. My head was in a perfect whirl, stuffed with great ghostly churches, classic ruins, wildernesses of noseless busts, chipped urns, and truncated idols, to say nothing of priests, pictures, and theatrical peasantry. But, presently, the memory of all these things began to give place to the anticipations of what I was going to see, real, spirit-stirring war, genuine combats, and all the pomp, pride, and circumstance of a grand historic struggle, of which I was about to be the spectator. Why not chronicler, as well as spectator? and why not more than either?

This was a theatre where the audience every now and then sprang over the footlights, and took a share in the stage business, hand in hand with the regular performers. So might I. I had read in the "Times" how amateurs had suddenly stepped forward under a heavy fire, and led into action some scattered company of Garibaldi's Redshirts, who always appeared but too happy to follow these improvised captains. Even my learned elder brother (if he will allow me to call him so) of the English bar, had towered in the front of battle, counselling heroes, chiding laggards, and recommending or directing the summary execution of runaways. Why not I? At any rate, among so many impromptu warriors, I might try my hand and my nerves, go where I was certain to be shot at, and see how I liked it; and if I did like it, why, I might spend all the rest of my holiday with the adventurous gentlemen "in front," and have something to relate to admiring grand-

children in the year 1890, or thereabouts. How sweet, when relating the Liberation of Italy, to be able to add the words, "Et quorum pars magna fui!" Thus I thought as we trotted and galloped along the causeway that traverses those pestilent Pontine Marshes; and then, after a hurried meal of fruit and chocolate at Terracina, we approached the frontier of Naples, where estafettes are changed.

With all our speed, we were behind time,—no uncommon event in Italy. In fact, we were eight hours overdue, half the delay lying at the door of the Papal Post Office, and the other on a smashed axletree which gave way in the heart of the Marshes, and procured us a delectable sojourn among the poisonous swamps, until a smith could be brought from Terracina to complete the repairs. No wonder that we found the Neapolitan courier in a rage, swearing like a pagan, and predicting his own dismissal on account of our delay. Very ill-humoured was the man of boots and bullion, as he locked the letter-bags and more sacred despatches in the boot of his dirty vehicle, which still bore the royal arms, to my surprise; though, when the versatile Neapolitan recovered his good temper, he showed me a fine silken flag, of the three magic colours, white, green, and red, wherewith he could cover the obnoxious Bourbon blazonry when he got within the Garibaldian outposts.

"Then why bear the royal arms at all?" asked I, with unsophisticated curiosity.

"And the garrison of Gaëta, then?" screeched the courier, with a shrug, and a grin of scorn at my obtuseness. "Madonna mia! I value my skin too much to offend the soldiers of King Francis. They would grill me like a carbonado, those *bricconi*, if they caught but a glimpse of the pretty silk banner that I am obliged to carry into Naples; know you that, Signor?"

So far, so good: and though the mail was dirty and the seats hard, the lean horses went a famous pace, until we reached Fondi—dark, dirty, brigand-breeding Fondi, where our team was to be changed. Up we flashed to the post-house, but only to be received by open doors and wringing of hands, and the heathen howls of ostlers and postilions. I never heard the body of Bacchus so frequently invoked before or since, or so many oaths, curses, and prayers, as the distracted denizens of the post-house gave vent to in five minutes. Our courier, that gold-laced Ganymede, who now divided his allegiance between King Francis and Garibaldi, soon caught the alarm, and tore his hair, and flung up his arms, and blasphemed with the best of them.

What was the matter? I partly guessed, but wanted some assurance, and I got it at last from a dishevelled woman with grey hair, who looked like an elderly Fury, but was, I believe, only the postmaster's grandmother. The story was brief and simple. The King wanted horses for his artillery train, and a party of Bavarians had just swept up every four-footed creature in Fondi, not leaving the postmaster a single hoof in his stable. Of course, the mail could not proceed. No wonder the courier was hallooing so piteously to Hercules and St. Januarius for help, mixing up all creeds in a breath, as Italians will. But it suggested itself to me, and to the other passengers, too, that if there were no horses, perhaps there were some

mules. Italian mules are fine, strapping brutes, and, with a peasant to each, we might yet organise a very decent team, and reach some station not yet pillaged of its equine treasures. But this crumb of comfort was soon dashed from our lips. If we thought mules might, at a pinch, serve instead of horses, it seemed that the same luminous idea had suggested itself to the Royalist General of Artillery. The foragers, who had swooped on the horses, had also driven off every serviceable mule. Nothing was left but a humble ass or two, the property of some poor peasants. Here was a clinching argument. Of course, it would be ludicrous to suggest that the royal mail

should proceed with a squadron of donkeys. But I contrived, while the Italian passengers, with passive fatalism, engaged flea-haunted beds in the dismal and garlic-perfumed locanda, to hire a stout ass by private contract. It was not my intention to emulate Sancho, by ambling across the province on this long-eared quadruped: I was a capital walker, and hardly sorry to have so good an opportunity of stretching my legs, while the donkey, I thought, would serve to carry such light baggage as I had, and help me on to some town where I could get a vetturino carriage, and rattle on the rest of the way to Naples.

Accordingly, I started, glad to get away from



the voluble lamentations of the courier, and pretty sure that, sleep where I might, I could hardly light on a more unsavoury resting place than Fondi. The ass, which bore my portmanteau and bag, was a sturdy, well conditioned ass, with plenty of red tassels and brass bells about its bridle, and a stout peasant lad to ensure with his cudgel that the pace was a fair one. Much of the summer heat was over, and though the air was rather heavy and oppressive, we made very good progress for about seven miles or so. At about that distance from Fondi lies a group of cottages, a mere hamlet, too small to possess a church, and where, to my disgust, no hospitable

bush, hanging over a door, told of purple wine within. I was very thirsty. My mouth was an oven, and my tongue painfully parched, and I would have given its weight in gold for a tumbler of frothing Bass; but even country wine seemed denied me. The peasant boy who drove the ass talked patois, and my Italian was chiefly learned out of Dante and other classics of the Arno, so we were not very intelligible conversationists; but he seemed to indicate that if I could hope to get refreshments anywhere, it would be at a solitary wayside dwelling, about a hundred yards ahead. On I went, and there, sure enough, was an open door, and a leafy bush above it.

In a chair outside sat an old man, apparently enjoying the evening sun.

"*Buon' giorno!*" I called out; "let me have some wine, and iced-water, too, if you have it, for I'm——"

Here I was cut short by not knowing the Italian word that stands for thirsty. The old man never moved. Asleep? I drew nearer. Yes, asleep, but in that last long sleep that none can break,—the solemn sleep of death. I started back with an involuntary cry. I had been addressing a dead man. The occupant of the chair was an old—probably a very old—man, for his wrinkled skin was yellow as an antique parchment, and the long but scanty locks that fell from under his black skull-cap were as white as snow. The hollow cheeks, the sunken features, told of gradual decay, and though the glassy eyes were open, the jaw had been carefully tied up, and a fair white linen cloth was folded around the breast of the corpse, while the hands were decorously disposed upon the lap, the withered fingers extended as if in prayer. On a nearer scrutiny, I observed that a small wooden platter was between the hands of the dead man, and in it lay several small coins of silver, and a much larger heap of copper. I now breathed more freely as I recollected to have heard of a singular custom which prevails in Italy, and with which all old residents are acquainted. When a death takes place in an indigent family, it is very usual to deposit the body, dressed in its holiday clothes, and with a plate between its hands, either at its own door, or in some public place, and to compel, as it were, this dumb and insensible mendicant to solicit alms of the charitable. The money obtained in this strange way goes to pay the expenses of the burial, *not* for the coffin, since bodies are buried uncoffined, but for masses, flowers, professional mourners, consecrated candles, and a sort of funeral-feast. This custom explained the presence of this ghastly guardian of the threshold, but still I shrank from it.

We Northern folks cannot but feel shocked at the callous manner in which Death, that dim, solemn mystery, is greeted by the natives of South Europe, and I admit that I felt a very great inclination to pursue my way with thirst unslaked, when a comely dark-haired woman, wearing the square kerchief of the Neapolitan peasantry of that province, came curtsying out to ask what could be done for my Excellency's service. Ashamed to run away from the presence of a dead body, I conquered my repugnance, entered the cottage, and asked for what refreshments I needed. The hostess, a buxom young matron, with a picturesque jacket of some bright colour and an immense rosary instead of the usual golden ornaments, was very chatty and pleasant, and told me that the Royalists had passed by that very afternoon on their foray for beasts of burden, but that she had no doubt but that, at Gaviaglio, or some such place, I should procure a carriage. I drank my wine-and-water, munched a few delicious grapes, and treated my guide to wine and the ass to water, all for a few carlini, and was taking my leave, when the hostess asked, with an apologetic smile, if I "would bestow a trifle on grandfather?"

"On grandfather?" said I, turning to where

the rigid figure sat, propped with cushions in its arm-chair; "do you mean that that is your grandfather, that——"

"*Si Signor,*" answered she, "the best of parents, the dearest, kindest old soul—so pious too—ah! what a loss! Ah me!"

Wonderful how the moods of those Italians change! She was actually sobbing, that smiling sunny-featured woman, who had seemed, while tripping about to fetch me a cool flask of the best, or playing between whiles with her two plump-cheeked children, perfectly happy and content. But how little can we judge from mere outward show, and how often do we find the face a sorry index to the heart! She was evidently much affected by the mention of the old man—her husband's father, she said—who had died that very morning about dawn, at a great age. The platter was to collect money to buy masses for his soul, she said, "not that he had many sins, poor dear;" and then she sobbed again. I am as good a Protestant as any, but whatever I might think of masses in the abstract, I felt that here was a case where all the logic of Exeter Hall would be wasted—these poor simple folks—it was plain that nothing but the ceremonies of the church they were bred in could carry balm to their bruised hearts, and I felt that I should be a brute if I were to deposit less than a dollar in the plate. I laid down a dollar, accordingly, said a kind word or two in my broken Tuscan, and departed, but not before the grateful woman had insisted on kissing my Excellency's generous hand, and wishing my Excellency a prosperous journey.

We stepped vigorously out along the dusty road, the boy, the ass, and I, and though night was falling, I cared little; now we were among the blue hills, and out of the Pontine marshes, where the night air is deadly, blowing as it does over many a foul morass. For a league we pushed on gaily enough, but then came a broad blue flash, and then a roll of thunder, and then a burst of hail and heavy rain, while the flash and roll were incessant, and the sky grew pitchy dark. Wet, and blinded by lightning, there was no chance of making our way to the next town; indeed, the road was no longer to be seen, except when a flash showed it; so, after a short council of war, back we scampered to the little wayside hostelry that we had so lately left, and where alone, according to the boy, we could hope for shelter. Soon did British traveller, donkey, and lad, stand before the porch of the small house of entertainment, but though less than two hours had elapsed, a change had come over us all. The donkey shook his dripping ears, and hung his sleek head wretchedly, the boy was wet and alarmed, and I was a dragged object to look upon, but eagerly bent on obtaining shelter and a fire to dry my clothes. Of course we found the door shut, and the arm-chair and its mute occupant removed into the house. Nay, but for the drenched bush that the wind was buffeting backwards and forwards, we should not have known the house from any other cottage, seeing it as we did by the transient glare of the blue lightning. I lifted the latch, and, flinging wide the door, entered without ceremony. I found a family group assembled around their supper-table. There

was my buxom friend of the afternoon, with her two little ones nestling close to the maternal apron, there was a stout bronzed peasant, her husband, and a tall black-haired girl, who might have been the sister of husband or wife, and three sturdy younger brothers, in brown jackets and crimson sashes, eating brown bread and fried beans in a way calculated to have given Lord Chesterfield a heart-ache.

I must not forget the other member of the family—the dead man—whose chair stood now in the chimney-corner, which no doubt had been his place during life, and whose blank gaze and wan face were turned towards the crackling fire of sticks. The platter had been removed from between the stiffened hands, the linen-band untied from the jaw; this I noticed, but in no other respect had the body been disturbed. Not a look, as far as I could well see, was turned towards the inanimate member of the company. The careless Neapolitans were laughing over their meal as if there were no such thing as Death at all. But my arrival created a sensation I was at a loss to account for. The family jumped from their seats, with confused and terror-stricken faces, uttering a profusion of imprecations more or less pious, or the reverse, and seemed more perturbed than they ought to have been at the arrival of a chance traveller. I accosted the hostess as an acquaintance, mentioned the raging storm, and announced my intention of staying all night, if they could accommodate me. I cannot say that they seemed anxious to house so distinguished a guest! Indeed, they gave me a clear idea that, but for shame's sake, they would have pushed me out again into the rain. Of course they were too humble—their poor little hut was not fit for such as my Excellency, nurtured in palaces, &c., but at last they gave way, and promised to make me up a bed in one of the little rooms up-stairs. The boy and donkey they absolutely refused to shelter. No plea of mine or entreaty of his prevailed: boy and ass were ruthlessly denied accommodation, and I was obliged to dismiss them, with double pay, into the howling storm, to reach Fondi as they might. Then the door was shut and locked, and a wooden bar put across it. Sticks were thrown on the fire, and I stood before it, drying myself as best I might, my baggage lying at my feet. The people went on with their supper, but not quite as light-heartedly as before; their mirth was not so loud, and I thought they often cast a look askance at me. Then the hostess remembered her courtly manners, and deferentially asked if she could have the pleasure of setting anything before the Signor Inglese. It was not to be supposed that his English Excellency could eat beans, but perhaps an egg? so fresh, or some milk and chocolate? or a rasher of winter bacon? But his English Excellency, though he was hungry, said not a word in reply. I could not have spoken, had my life depended on my oratory. My heart leaped, and then stood still; my hair rose bristling, my brow grew damp with fear, my eyes were riveted with horror and half incredulous marvel on the white-haired, venerable corpse of the patriarch in the arm-chair. And no wonder! *I saw the dead man move!* The glossy eyes rolled horribly in their wrinkled orbits, the

jaws relaxed into a yawn, the arms were stretched as the arms of one awakening from sleep, and the old man's body rocked and quivered in the arm-chair. The sight of that yawning, glaring, moving corpse was almost too much for my nerves. I clutched the arm of the hostess; with a shrinking hand I pointed to the horrid sight—the hallucination—as I deemed it, of my fatigued senses. Ha! she sees it too, but I see no fear on her face. Some annoyance, perhaps, and a covert smile; surely I am mistaken; but—no, those dead lips move, work, speak! Audibly fall upon my agonised ear the hollow accents of the departed. What are those words that break the silence? What fearful revelation to the living necessitates such a breach of the laws of Nature? What secrets of the prison-house are about to be dragged into light? Let me listen to the dead man's awful speech.

"*Che ora è?*"

"What's o'clock?" that was all he said, upon my honour, as a gentleman. "What's o'clock?" A disembodied spirit bursting the gates of night, and intruding on the living, to ask what o'clock it was! They heard it. They all heard it. And my tortured ear was next insulted by such a peal of hearty horse laughter, begun by one, chorused by the rest, as I had seldom listened to. My brain reeled. Here was I, in presence of a corpse that demanded to know what o'clock it was, and the whole company were laughing like a menagerie of hyænas! "*Che ora è?*" repeated the dead man, into whose eyes there gradually stole more speculation than becomes the defunct, on the Swan's authority. And still the peasants laughed, and the deceased patriarch became more and more palpably alive. I gasped for breath, so utter was my amazement. I had read of trances and apparent deaths, and resuscitations, during funerals or after interment, but never had I heard of the dead alive being welcomed back into the bosom of their family, amid peals of uproarious laughter, as if their revival was a rare joke. But when the old man made an effort to rise, I could bear it no longer, but rushed to the door. To my surprise, one of the young men sprang up and set his back against it, grinning but resolute. Another jumped from his chair to reinforce.

"Scusa! Signor!" said the landlord, "but you cannot go just yet."

I insisted, tried to force my way, and was good-humouredly baffled. I got into a towering passion, but in vain. They were four to one, and they swore by all the saints that I should not stir a step. I had come for my own pleasure. I should stay for theirs.

"Do you want to rob me, you villains?" I shouted.

"Gracious Signor, the idea!"

"Are you brigands?"

"Signor, what a blunder! We are poor, but honest."

Then why would they not let me pass? "Signor, grandfather,"—that word explained all. I turned; the old man was actually seated at supper, affectionately waited on by his two daughters, and playing a capital knife and fork for one who had shuffled off this mortal coil.

"Then," said I, as I viewed the hoary humbug,



who I now saw was as completely alive as myself, "your precious parent was not dead, after all?" They confessed that he was not.

"And his pretended death was produced by—"

"By this, Signor carissimo," said the hostess, opening a cupboard and exhibiting a bottle labelled chloroform.

"And this atrocious deception," I began, but was again interrupted with:

"Signor Excellency, have a little pity! We are poor industrious folks; we farm and we sell wine; but we have many mouths to feed, and there are debts. This is a harmless plan we have devised of raising a trifling sum to buy seed-corn and oil for winter. If grandfather were really dead, nobody would grudge a few carlini for his burial, and those kind souls who give under the belief that a dead hand holds out the platter, will be all the better for it in purgatory. The worst of it is, that your Excellency cannot go—"

"Cannot go!" I boiled over with wrath.

"If your Excellency could make shift with very poor accommodation until Friday?"

"Until Friday!" I could only repeat the impudent proposal. But the landlady and her spouse, with one accord though many words, proceeded to lay down before me the following propositions: *imprimis*, that I had most inconveniently popped behind the scenes and pried into a Blue Beard chamber I had no right to know the secrets of; *secondly*, that unless the delusion were kept up, no profit could be expected, but rather popular vengeance; *thirdly*, that the two next days would be marked by a concourse of pilgrims to Fondi, for the festival of the holy and miracle-working St. Somebody, and a plentiful crop of small coin was expected. The fourth proposition was, that I should remain with them till the festa was over and the pilgrims gone home, that I should be fed, cherished, and lodged as well as could be expected, for the moderate remuneration of one scudo per day, and that then I should be permitted to depart, on giving my promise not to say a word about my unlawful detention, while within the kingdom of Naples.

Who would not have stormed in such a case of false imprisonment? I flew into a passion, and threatened dreadful revenge. I would go to the judge, and the intendant; and the archbishop, I believe; and the British consul, I am certain. Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should hear of it, and so should Garibaldi's Englishman. What did they think Lord Palmerston would say? To my chagrin, they had never heard of Lord Palmerston at all. They were obdurate, for their profits were at stake. After an hour's fiercely verbose argument, and five minutes' wrestling with one of the stout young cubs who held the door, I was forced to surrender at discretion, and accept the terms of the conquerors. *Væ victis!* What a miserable three nights and two days did I spend under that roof-tree, guarded like a prisoner of war, in spite of my parole, for there were always a couple of young peasants at my elbow, and they watched lest I should reveal the secret to any stray pilgrim! I slept in a little cockloft, well garnished by an interesting colony of mosquitoes; my bed was not a very bad one,

with its clean brown linen and its ticking stuffed with the husks of maize; they waited on me—the womankind, that is,—civilly enough, and they fed me with the best they had for my scudo a day, not too high a price, when one considers their enforced monopoly of my custom. I was not very uncomfortable, physically speaking, and had I chosen to stay for my own pleasure, should have been content. But upon compulsion! I roared inwardly with bitterness of spirit, as I saw the humble devotees troop by to the shrine of St. Somebody, and seldom fail to drop a few baiocchi, at least, into the platter of the venerable old scamp, who sat outside in his chair, as rigid and senseless as chloroform could make him. And then, the torment of seeing that aged impostor, as it were, off duty, and in the family circle, nightly to witness his recovery from the stupor due to the drug, to see him yawn and stretch, with a vivid remembrance of my original terrors, and then to lose my own appetite in witnessing his abominable performances as a trencherman. I never thought, when I heard that every one had a skeleton in his cupboard, that I should ever be forced into intimacy with such a grisly piece of property, that I should breakfast and sup every day with the family skeleton occupying the head of the table, and generally demeaning itself as the founder of the feast.

He was not a bad old man either; a cackling, child-petting old grandsire he seemed, when desisting from his praiseworthy exertions for the benefit of his relatives. His third appearance before the public was, I am happy to say, the last. The pilgrims had ceased to flow past, and the carlini to rattle in the plate, and the Dead Alive had already obtained a hatful of money. Besides, the old gentleman's health might suffer from further chloroforming, his affectionate relatives being resolved to postpone his final and legitimate exhibition as long as filial piety could contrive it. For these various reasons the show came to an end, and my imprisonment along with it. The neighbours were called to witness the happy recovery of grandpapa, who had been three days in a trance, and suddenly awaked amid the congratulations of his kindred. All incredulity was repressed by the presence of the four sturdy peasants, who were ready with cudgel and fist to maintain, if necessary, that their progenitor had been as dead as Julius Cæsar, and was now as living as Mazzini. And the timely gift of a brace of dollars brought in the alliance of the church, the curé of the next village publicly avowing the resuscitation as a pure miracle, not wholly unconnected with the Immaculate Conception, nor entirely divested of reference to the future triumph of Papal authority over heretics and red shirts; by which we may guess that the curé was of the reactionary party.

I departed in sullen silence, answering no word to the salutations and blessings of the Phoenix and his offspring. And they wished my Excellency a good journey, and called me their preserver, the hypocrites! I got somehow to Naples, through the burned and pillaged country, but the time lost was irrevocable: my holiday was spoiled. I went to the front. I plunged into the midst of Garibaldi's ragged heroes, and I nearly got hit by a shell or two from the fortress, but skirmish or

battle royal saw I none. Brief as was my stay, I missed the homeward-bound steamer, had to wait a week for another, and finally reached Dover just on the last day of the vacation. JOHN HARWOOD.

### VERRIO AND LAGUERRE.

POPE, denouncing the vanity of wealth and the crimes committed in the name of taste, visits Lord Timon's villa, and finds plenty of pegs on which to hang criticism, ample scope for satire. With depreciating eyes he surveys the house and grounds, their fittings and garniture, almost as though he were going to make a bid for them. "He that blames would buy," says the proverb. Then he passes to the out-buildings, taking notes like a broker in possession under a *fi. fa.*

And now the chapel's silver bell you hear,  
That summons you to all the pride of prayer :  
Light quirks of music, broken and uneven,  
Make the soul dance upon a jig to heaven.  
On painted ceiling you devoutly stare,  
Where sprawl the saints of Verrio or Laguerre,  
On gilded clouds in fair expansion lie,  
And bring all paradise before the eye, &c.

Who was Verrio ? Who was Laguerre ?

ANTONIO VERRIO was born at Lecce, a town in the Neapolitan province of Terra di Otranto, in the year 1639. Early in life he visited Venice to study the colouring of the Venetian masters. He returned a successful, not a meritorious painter. In 1660 he was at Naples, where he executed a large fresco work, "Christ healing the Sick," for the Jesuit College. This painting, we are told, was conspicuous for its brilliant colour and forcible effect.

Subsequently the artist was in France, painting the high altar of the Carmelites at Toulouse. Dominici says that "Verrio had such a love for travelling that he could not remain in his own country."

Charles II., desiring to revive the manufacture of tapestry at Mortlake, which had been stopped by the civil war, invited Verrio to England ; but when he arrived the king changed his plans, and entrusted the painter with the decoration in fresco of Windsor Castle. Charles was induced to this by seeing a work of Verrio's at Lord Arlington's house at the end of St. James's Park, the site of Buckingham House. "In possession of the Cartoons of Raphael," Fuseli lectured, angrily, on the subject, years afterwards, "and with the magnificence of Whitehall before his eyes, he suffered Verrio to contaminate the walls of his palaces." But there was raging then a sort of epidemical belief in native deficiency and in the absolute necessity of importing art talent. In his first

picture Verrio represented the king in a glorification of naval triumph. He decorated most of the ceilings of the palace, one whole side of St. George's Hall and the Chapel ; but few of his works are now extant. Hans Jordaen's lively fancy and ready pencil induced his critics to affirm of him, "that his figures seemed to flow from his hand upon the canvas as from a pot ladle." Certainly, from Verrio's fertility in apologue and allegory, and the rapidity of his execution, it might have been said that he spattered out his works with a mop. Nothing daunted him. He would have covered an acre of ceiling with an acre of apotheosis. As Walpole writes, "His exuberant pencil was ready at pouring out gods, goddesses, kings, emperors, and triumphs over those public surfaces on which the eye never rests long enough to criticise, and where one should be sorry to place the works of a better master. I mean ceilings and staircases. The New Testament or the Roman History cost him nothing but ultramarine ; that and marble columns and marble steps he never spared."

He shrunk from no absurdity or incongruity. His taste was even worse than his workmanship. He delighted to avenge any wrong he had received, or fancied he had received, by introducing his enemy, real or imaginary, in his pictures. Thus, on the ceiling of St. George's Hall, he painted Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, in the character of Faction dispersing libels ; in another place, having a private quarrel with Mrs. Marriott, the house-keeper, he borrowed her face for one of his Furies. Painting for Lord Exeter, at Burleigh, in a representation of Bacchus bestriding a hogshead, he copied the head of a dean with whom he was at variance. It is more excusable, perhaps, that when compelled by his patron to insert a Pope in a procession little flattering to his religion, he added the portrait of the Archbishop of Canterbury then living. In a picture of the "Healing of the Sick," he was guilty of the folly and impropriety of introducing among the spectators of the scene portraits of himself, Sir Godfrey Kneller, and Mr. May, surveyor of the works, all adorned with the profuse periwigs of the period. But he could not transfer to his pictures a decorum and a common sense that had no place in his mind. Hence he loved to depict a garish and heterogeneous whirl of saints and sinners, pan-pipes, periwigs, cherubims, silk stockings, angels, small-swords, the naked and the clothed, goddesses, violoncellos, stars, and garters. A Latin inscription in honour of the painter and his paintings appeared over the tribune at the end of St George's Hall : — "*Antonius Verrio Neapolitanus non ignobili stirpe natus, ad honorem Dei, Augustissimi Regis Caroli Secundi et Sancti Georgii, molem hunc felicissimâ manu decoravit.*"

The king lavished kindness upon this pretentious and absurd Italian. He was appointed to the place of master-gardener, and lodgings in a house in St. James's Park, to be afterwards known as Carlton House, were set apart for his use. For works executed in Windsor Castle, between the years 1676 and 1681, he received the sum of 6845*l.* 8*s.* 4*d.* Vertue copied the account "from a half-sheet of paper fairly writ in a

hand of the time." It particularises the rooms decorated and the cost. For the king's guard chamber, 300*l.*; for the king's presence chamber, 200*l.*; for the queen's drawing-room, 250*l.*; for the queen's bed-chamber, 100*l.*; and so on until the enormous total is reached. He employed many workmen under him, was of extravagant habits, and kept a great table. He considered himself as an art-monarch entitled to considerable state and magnificence. He was constant in his applications to the Crown for money to carry on his works. With the ordinary pertinacity of the dun, he joined a freedom which would have been remarkable, if the king's indulgence and good humour had not done so much to foster it. Once, at Hampton Court, having lately received an advance of a thousand pounds, he found the king so encircled by courtiers that he could not approach. He called out loudly and boldly:

"Sire! I desire the favour of speaking to your Majesty."

"Well, Verrio," the king inquired, "what is your request?"

"Money, sire! I am so short in cash that I am not able to pay my workmen, and your Majesty and I have learned by experience that pedlars and painters cannot give credit long."

The king laughed at this impudent speech, and reminded the painter that he had but lately received a thousand pounds.

"Yes, sire," persisted Verrio, "but that was soon paid away."

"At that rate, you would spend more than I do to maintain my family."

"True, sire," answered the painter; "but does your Majesty keep an open table as I do?"

Verrio designed the large equestrian portrait of the king for the hall of Chelsea College, but it was finished by Cooke, and presented by Lord Ranelagh. On the accession of James II. he was again employed at Windsor in Wolsey's Tomb-house, which it was intended should be used as a Roman Catholic chapel. He painted the king and several of his courtiers in the hospital of Christchurch, London, and he painted also at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

But soon there was an end of his friends and patrons, the Stuarts. James had fled; William of Orange was on the throne; a revolution had happened little favourable to Signor Verrio's religion or political principles. There is a commendable staunchness in his adherence to the ruined cause, in his abandoning his post of master-gardener, and his refusal to work for the man he regarded as a usurper, though there is something ludicrous in the notion of punishing King William by depriving him of Verrio's art. He did not object, however, to work for the nobility. For some years he was employed by Lord Exeter at Burleigh, and afterwards at Chatsworth. He was true to his old execrable style. He introduced his own portrait in a picture-history of Mars and Venus, and in the chapel at Chatsworth he produced a dreadful altar-piece representing the incredulity of St. Thomas. He painted also at Lowther Hall. For his paintings at Burleigh alone he was paid more money than Raphael or Michael Angelo received for all their works. Verrio was engaged on them

for about twelve years, handsomely maintained the while, with an equipage at his disposal, and a salary of 1500*l.* a-year. Subsequently, on the persuasion of Lord Exeter, Verrio was induced to lend his aid to royalty once more, and he condescended to decorate the grand staircase at Hampton Court for King William. Walpole suggests that he accomplished this work as badly as he could, "as if he had spoiled it out of principle." But this is not credible. The painting was in the artist's usual manner, and neither better nor worse—and his best was bad enough, in all conscience. His usual faults of gaudy colour, bad drawing, and senseless composition were, of course, to be found; but, then, these were equally apparent in all his other works. Later in life his sight began to fail him, and he received from Queen Anne a pension of 200*l.* a-year for his life. To the last royal favour was extended to him, and he was selected to superintend the decorations of Blenheim. But death intervened. The over-rated, over-paid, and most meretricious painter died at Hampton Court in 1707. There is evident error in Dominici's statement that the old man met his death from drowning on a visit to Languedoc. Walpole, summing up his merits and demerits, says rather contradictorily, "He was an excellent painter for the sort of subjects on which he was employed, without much invention and with less taste!"

The father of LOUIS LAGUERRE was by birth a Catalan, and held the appointment of Keeper of the Royal Menagerie at Versailles. To his son, born at Paris, in 1663, Louis XIV. stood godfather, bestowing on the child his distinguished Christian name. The young Laguerre received his education at a Jesuit college, with the view of entering the priesthood, but a confirmed impediment in his speech demonstrated his unfitness for such a calling. He began to evince considerable art-ability, and, on the recommendation of the fathers of the college, he eventually embraced the profession of painting. He then entered the Royal Academy of France, and studied for a short time under Charles Le Brun. In 1683 he came to England with one Picard, a painter of architecture. At this time Verrio was in the acme of his prosperity. He was producing allegorical ceilings and staircases by wholesale. He had a troop of workmen under him, obedient to his instructions, dabbling in superficial yards of pink flesh, and furlongs of blue clouds. Verrio was happy to secure forthwith so efficient an assistant as Laguerre, and soon found him plenty to do. In nearly every work of Verrio's after this date, it is probable that Laguerre had a hand. He seems to have been an amiable, kindly, simple-minded man, without much self-assertion or any strong opinions of his own. He was quite content to do as Verrio bid him, even imitating him and following him through his figurative mysteries, and floundering with him in the mire of graceless drawing and gaudy colour and ridiculous fable. He had at least as much talent as his master—probably even more. But he never sought to out-shine or displace him.

"A modest, unintriguing man," as Vertue calls him, he was quite satisfied with being second in

command, no matter how ignorant and inefficient might be his captain.

John Tijon, his father-in-law, a founder of iron balustrades, said of him, "God has made him a painter, and there left him."

He worked under Verrio in St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and at Burleigh; he executed staircases at old Devonshire House, in Piccadilly; at Buckingham House; and at Petworth; assisted in the paintings at Marlborough House, St. James's Park; decorated the saloon at Blenheim; and in many of the apartments at Burleigh on the Hill "the walls are covered with his Cæsars."

William of Orange gave the painter lodgings at Hampton Court, where it seems he painted the Labours of Hercules in *chiar 'oscuro*, and repaired Andrea Mantegna's pictures of the Triumphs of Julius Cæsar.

The commissioners for rebuilding St. Paul's Cathedral unanimously chose Laguerre to decorate the cupola with frescoes. Subsequently this decision was abandoned in favour of Thornhill; but, as Walpole says, "the preference was not ravished from Laguerre by superior merit."

Sir James Thornhill received payment for his paintings in the dome of St. Paul's at the rate of forty shillings the square yard. The world has still the opportunity of deciding upon the merits or demerits of those works. Vertue thinks that Sir James was indebted to Laguerre for his knowledge of historical painting on ceilings, &c. For decorating the staircase of the South Sea Company's House, Sir James received only twenty-five shillings per square yard. By speculating in the shares of the same company, it may be stated that another artist, Sir Godfrey Kneller, lost 20,000*l.* But prosperous Sir Godfrey could afford to lose: his fortune could sustain even such a shock as that: at his death he left an estate of 2000*l.* per annum. He had intended that Thornhill should decorate the staircase of his seat at Wilton, but learning that Newton was sitting to Sir James, he grew angry. "No portrait painter shall paint my house," cried Sir Godfrey, and he gave the commission to Laguerre, who did his very best for his brother artist.

On the union of England and Scotland, he received an order from Queen Anne to design a set of tapestries commemorating the event, introducing portraits of her Majesty and her Ministers. Laguerre executed the requisite drawings; but it does not appear that the work was ever carried out.

In 1711, he was a director of an academy of drawing instituted in London, under the presidency of Kneller. On the resignation of Kneller, there was a probability of Laguerre being elected in his place; but he was again defeated by his rival, Thornhill, probably as much from his own want of management and self-confidence, as from any other cause.

He drew designs for engravers, and etched a Judgment of Midas. Round the room of a tavern in Drury Lane, where was held a club of *virtuosi*, he painted a Bacchanalian procession, and presented the house with his labours.

He had many imitators, for there are followers of bad as well as of good examples. Among

others, Riario, Johnson, Brown, besides Lanscroon, Scheffers, and Picard, who worked with him under Verrio.

His son and pupil, John Laguerre, manifested considerable ability, and engraved a series of prints of "Hob in the Well," which had a large popularity, though they were but indifferently executed. He was fond of the theatre, with a talent for music and singing; painted scenery and stage decorations. He even appeared upon the boards as a singer.

Laguerre, in his age, feeble and dropsical, attended Drury Lane on the 20th April, 1721, to witness his son's performance in a musical version of Beaumont and Fletcher's "Island Princess;" but, before the curtain rose, the poor old man was seized with an apoplectic fit, and died the same night. He was buried in the churchyard of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. The son subsequently quitted the stage, and resumed his first profession. He etched a plate, representing Falstaff, Pistol, and Doll Tearsheet, with other theatrical characters, in allusion to a quarrel between the players and patentees. He died in very indigent circumstances, in March, 1748.

Time and the whitewasher's double-tie brush have combined to destroy most of the ceilings and staircases of Signior Verrio and Monsieur Laguerre. For their art, there was not worth enough in it to impart any lasting vitality. They are remembered more from Pope's lines, than on any other account—preserved in them, like ugly curiosities in good spirits. To resort to the poet for verses applicable though familiar:

"Pretty in amber to observe the forms  
Of hair, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms;  
The things we know are neither rich nor rare,  
But wonder how the devil they got there!"

DUTTON COOK.



## BEGGARS IN ITALY.

## A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

THERE seems to prevail a traditional belief among the Italians, that all strangers who arrive at their shores are travellers *par excellence*, come in search of the pleasures and enjoyments peculiar to their country, and that the natives have consequently a just claim upon their generosity, if not even a prescriptive right to levy a tax upon them in the shape of alms and charity. Indeed, the beggar in Italy occupies an original page in the mendicity-history of nations. I do not allude here to the indigent old, infirm, lame, blind, sick, and cripples, who are met with in all countries of Europe, but solely to the idle vagabonds who prefer begging to working, because it is more easy and convenient, and to those who try to enforce their presumptive claim, not from want or necessity, but from sheer homage to the popular custom.

The children, of all ages, constitute by far the largest portion of that community, and it is these juvenile beggars in particular that prove a perfect nuisance and try the patience of the most patient traveller in Italy. At every place where he stops, either to enjoy the beauties of Nature or of art, he is sure to be surrounded by a swarm of these juveniles, who pursue their object with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. They are found in troops in the streets and in the fine walks round the place; and were you to give to each of them only a five-centime piece, your alms in that way would amount to more than a Louis-d'or per day.

In Piedmont, Lombardy, and Venice, they are neither so numerous nor so annoying; but in Central Italy, in the so-called (late) Duchies, the class has arrived at the climax of development, nor is it in the least checked in its vocation by either police or any other local authority. At every church—nay, in the church itself—at every public edifice, gallery, and even street corner or road that leads to some visitable spot, you encounter them hands open, and begging in a tone and language that frequently partakes of the character of an absolute demand. With admirable tact and cunning, they post themselves at the narrowest spot of an up-hill road, where the horses can proceed only at a very slow pace; there they thrust their hats into the very midst of the vehicle, and exclaim incessantly, “Povero infelice, Signor!” until you satisfy them with a gratuity. At a café at Leghorn, a good-looking

and decently-dressed woman presented herself at my table for alms, after having despatched her four children, one by one, to me for the same purpose. At Florence, I was stopped in the street by several well-dressed men and women, who made some inquiries, or drew my attention to some notice or placard, after which they held out their hands by way of leave-taking, to claim the usual alien-tribute, called alms.

At the port of Leghorn, I found at every street corner a number of beggars with a sort of money-box in hand, which they continually rattled, and accosted the passers-by with the usual “Povero infelice, Signor!” I perceived by the sound, that each of the boxes only contained one single copper coin, the remainder having no doubt been taken out and pocketed as soon as they were thrown in.

I was one morning looking out of my bedroom window of the third floor in the hotel where I was staying, to enjoy the beautiful sight of the sea below me, when I was noticed by a cripple to whom I had unfortunately given on the previous day, in passing along the street, a few coppers. He soon recognised me, nodded with his hat to me, and indulged in all sorts of ridiculous gestures and grimaces, until I threw him down a copper coin wrapped in a bit of paper. This was the signal for him to fix his regular station before my window; he followed me, as soon as I made my appearance at the street door for a walk, upon his little truck, which he wheeled with his hands, incessantly exclaiming, “Monsieur, donnez-moi quelque chose!” (he heard me talk to the porter in French) until he got something out of me. But my ill-luck did not finish there. No sooner had I thrown down, in the first instance, from my window the copper coin to the cripple, than it was observed by some of the fraternity, and brought to the spot the whole beggar community of the quarter, men, women, and children, who, rattling, crying, singing, and throwing up their hats, made the spot a perfect nuisance to me, and obliged me at last to keep my windows shut, and forego the fine sight of the blue sea before me.

In the church of San Marco, at Venice, I saw a woman with a veil over her head, prostrated on the steps of one of the altars. She was wringing her hands and praying in deep devotion, and seemed to labour under great mental affliction. On my passing her, she half rose, and stretched out her hand for charity; I at once put some copper coins into it, which she immediately threw into the poor-box that stood nailed to a pillar a few steps from the altar, after which she returned and resumed her former position and prayers. I looked at her for some moments with an air of astonishment, which was perceived by a gentleman not far off, who then stepped towards me and remarked, “Don't believe, Signor, that this woman is poor; she is well off, and even possesses a house of her own, but she is a penitent, and in deep contrition here, daily, begs alms for the Holy Virgin.” What added still more to my astonishment was the circumstance, that the informant did not himself hold out his hand for a gratuity for the information he had just given me, though it was uncalled for. I was actually surprised at his forbearance, recollecting that a few days previously,

when on the Piazza della Signora, at Florence, I happened to ask a well-dressed gentleman my way to a neighbouring street; he at once offered to guide me thither, observing that he was going himself that way. Having reached the street, I was about taking my leave with a "Grazie, Signor," when he held out his hand for a donation, and I put a 20-centime piece into it.

The rough picture I have drawn above of the character and conduct of the beggars is, however, frequently softened by some mild and humane traits in the character of some of the younger generation. I was sitting before a café at Genoa, leisurely sipping my cup of coffee (the Italians can drink that beverage at any hour in the day), when a cripple, quite a child, approached my table for some alms; I gave him the four lumps of sugar remaining on the waiter or salver before me, with which he limped away to the three other cripples close by, still younger than himself, and put a lump into each of the ugly mouths of his companions, keeping one for himself. I saw by the likeness of their features that they were all brothers and sisters. He then pointed me out to them with the finger, and they looked so gratefully and smilingly at me, and smacked their lips all the while with the sweet food in their mouths, that I resolved to gratify them with the gift as often as they made their appearance. Next day I found them at their post before the café, and having received their four lumps, they moved away without asking for anything else.

On arriving at some of the villages which have acquired a name amongst the tourists for some architectural beauty or fine scenery, the whole population, men, women, and children, and even able-bodied and good-looking people, are out begging. They surround the unfortunate traveller in large numbers, each and all putting forth their hands for alms, and do not stir from the spot, despite all the "andante al diavolos" he may tell them, until he has complied with their demand. I went in company of a friend to Fiesole, near Florence, which commands a view of the whole of the Arno valley and the city of Dante, a scenery of unparalleled beauty. We were ten times stopped on the way, though but a short distance, by intrusive beggars, and my friend told me a story, how he had once, near Candénabbia, been stopped, within half an hour, six times by beggars in the very hottest mid-day hour, when the more decent of the fraternity usually keep their siesta. He had just come to the end of his story, when we arrived at Fiesole, and halted on the square before the Basilica, whence we were about to ascend the steep footpath leading to the Capuchin cloister, when we were in a moment surrounded by men, women, and children, each house furnishing its contingent of beggars, and in whose company we were compelled to ascend to the cloister. All had some straw-work and plattings to offer for sale. They would accept of no excuse or assurance that they were of no use to us. I was particularly pressed to buy for a franc a straw-plumage; I might present it, they said, to my Signora; I might stick it in my hat, or carry it in my hand as an ornament, &c., &c. But when they saw that all persuasive suggestions for pur-

chase were unavailable, they turned beggars in the strictest sense of the term, held out their hands, and demanded their usual tax of alms. Not one of them accompanied their request with the customary "povero infelice," or even "povero" alone, but actually demanded a five-centime piece a head. We at last ransomed our freedom by handing for distribution to a black-eyed, pretty girl a few copper coins, and telling the others to go "al diavolo," at which they all burst into a loud, merry laughter, apparently well pleased with the "beggar's comedy" they had been playing.

## OLD FICULEA.

OF all the soul-depressing spots on the Roman Campagna (and of such spots there is no lack), the most depressing is perhaps the tract bounded on one side by the junction of the Tiber and Anio, and by the roots of Monte Gentile on the other. The very contrast which the traveller observes in the scene before him serves to heighten and deepen the black discontent that grows on him as he goes along. It is a speciality of all distant views to be enchanting, but the view that there bounds the horizon has a beauty passing even that of its fellows.

The fairest landscape the earth can show could not require a more worthy background than is there: so clearly do the blue Latin hills rise against the sky; so soft is the sunny beauty of their sides broken here and there by a ravine, or flecked by the shadow flung by passing clouds or by some taller peak beyond; so quiet are the villages and castles that crown the mountain spurs. In another direction a green fringe of wood near Monticelli stretches along in ever-varying outline as far as the lone Soracte, and onward till it loses itself on the sea-shore. In front lies the garden portion of the Campagna, veined by its ancient aqueducts and by the modern railway, the sharp lines of both which guide the eye to Tusculum and the Monte Cavi. There noble villas nestle in the ilex groves, and the sister lakes of Albano and Nemi are hidden in a setting of golden chestnuts. But when the traveller, charmed into expectant hope that this promise of loveliness is to be realised in the foreground, turns his attention to what immediately surrounds him, he finds that he has hoped in vain. A dreary expanse of parched grass, hardly diversified at intervals by corn-fields, is all that meets his gaze. Some trees near running water, and some scanty patches of verdure rather intensify than relieve the air of barrenness that hangs around. A few capacious farm-houses rising here and there over the plain, shelter the household gods of the *futuro* or steward, until the malaria drives his sickly children to the city or to the mountains. No other human habitation is visible, unless we choose to dignify by that title some conical sheds resembling exaggerated mushrooms in colour, and not unlike them in shape. These protect the shepherd from the passing storm. No vintage song is heard there; for the vine, uncouth and distorted though it be, loves to make a civilised soil the native country of its family of graceful pampini and clustering fruit. Silence is broken only by the lark at morn and even, and by the grasshopper which chirps its song all the hot day through. To be sure there are deep ruts worn into the basalt pavement of the old Roman road, and ruts in pavements are suggestive of iron-shod waggon-wheels and noisy traffic. But noise-suggestive though they be, these ruts of the pre-macadamite period are as powerless to break the prevailing sense of solitude, as are the fossil ferns of the pre-adamite period to bring before our eyes the grace of the living plants as they once unrolled their traceried leaves in some primeval brake. The noise ceased with the traffic, and that went away ages ago, when the waggons disappeared, along

with the hands that had fashioned them. And yet, if the traveller would but remove the few feet of earth, heaped by time over the fields in which he is standing, he would find more than enough to counteract the influence of the desolation and dead silence that have soured him. He would find his feet resting on the ruins of cities, the foundations of which were laid before history was; the stones of whose walls were hewn by brawny hands, whose deeds are closely interwoven with the early vicissitudes of Rome. The scorched grass and drooping wild flowers would give place to costly mosaics, where art has created flowers of her own, whose imperishable freshness no dog-star may parch. The waters of the neighbouring rivulet, no longer scanty and stained, would spring clear into the air from many a courtyard fountain, and gurgle through long-forgotten conduits to the marble baths they once refreshed. For here formerly rose the walls of Fidenæ, Crustumerium, Nomentum, Corniculum, and Ficulea. This laying bare of the past, which no single traveller could effect for himself, has been done long since for all.

As far back as 1824 excavations were undertaken in this neighbourhood, and carried on with splendid success.

In 1856-57, they were resumed by the Congregation of the Propaganda to whom the place belongs, and a new series of discovery was inaugurated, which has brought to light many interesting objects connected with the city of Ficulea, the site of which had been hitherto unknown.

We are not going to give an account of the various populations that ebbed and flowed over this region, nor to examine whether the Osci or Siculi were the dominant race. But we shall pick up a few of the waifs and strays stranded by these tribe waves as they rolled in one after another, and from them endeavour to gain some idea of the aspect presented by the beach on which they broke. In other words, by help of the monuments brought to light in the excavation, we shall try and get a peep at the every-day life of the old Italian town of Ficulea.

First of all, the worthy Marcus Concius Cerenthus reads us a sermon from a stone erected by himself to perpetuate the memory of his own good works. He was charged with the duties of Accensus Velatus, and in consequence enjoyed the immunities belonging to the sacerdotal body. He acquaints us in his inscription that he had, of his own free will, paved a part of the hill, 340 feet long and nine feet broad, together with the foot-paths. Besides which, he had made the said hill easier for travellers by filling up the valley and lowering the top. If this excellent functionary could be translated into a corresponding modern official, his position in society would be exactly that of a town and parliamentary crier in holy orders. We are inclined to doubt, however, whether any one of his lay brethren of to-day would be willing to constitute himself a benevolent Board of Public Works full of as much zeal for the well-being of the Queen's highway, as was their reverend predecessor of the old Italian town. Need we wonder that Ficulea, blessed in the pos-

session of such public-spirited, self-commemorating authorities, became a favourite summer residence for the worn-out statesmen and citizens of Rome? Cicero writes to tell Atticus of his intention to spend some days at his suburban retreat there. The poet Martial styles a nephew his neighbour twice over, since they lived close to each other both in Rome and in old Ficulea. What a venerable city! which in the days of Martial was distinguished by the epithet of "the old!"

Next come the boys and girls of the public schools. The Ficulensian territory had been given long before by the Senate to Appius Claudius, as a home for the crowd of hungry clients which had followed him up from the Sabine country. It is almost certain, therefore, that some of these school children were their descendants. If so, the old Claudian blood must have been strangely sweetened in their veins by lapse of time, so as to make possible the precocious burst of loyalty with which they greet the Emperor Marcus Aurelius in a tablet of thanksgiving. It was but little to call his majesty Sovereign Pontiff; to respect him as tribune, as consul; to address him as a most excellent and most indulgent Prince. These youthful courtiers give a retrospective character to their flattery by burning incense to his hereditary greatness. They salute him as the son of the godlike Antoninus Pius, the grandson of the godlike Hadrian, the great-grandson of the godlike Trajan, the Parthian, the great-great-grandson of the godlike Nerva. It would appear that emperors in those days lived to be called not so much the nephews of their uncles, as the great-great-grand-sons of their great-great-grand-mother's husband. It may be that the lowest form boys of the Ficulensian school had been set to calculate according to the De Morgan of the day the precise amount of divinity enshrined in their Emperor. Given four imperial ancestors, each rejoicing in divine attributes, how divine must that emperor be who claimed descent from all four!

The stage upon which this goodly company of statesmen, poets, priests, youths and maidens played their respective parts, was not unworthy of their buskins and real life masks. The hilly road which the good priest had subdued, once crossed the little rivulet whose banks are now shaded by a few stunted trees. The excavators have laid bare close to these trees the pavements of what had been once luxurious bath-rooms. The masonry of the walls has fallen a prey to devastation and time, but the floors of four large apartments have escaped uninjured. In the first apartment are represented in mosaic seven baskets filled with fruit and flowers, with two birds of light plumage resting on the flowers of one of them, the other six being arranged in graceful order around. Outside all the vases and surrounding them runs a large circlet formed of leafy sprays, garlanded together, and relieved with gay colours all about. In each of the four corners chubby heads, with winged temples and swollen puffy cheeks, proclaim themselves to be the four winds. On the floor of the next apartment, Theseus and the Minotaur are engaged in deadly combat in the

Labyrinth, the winding mazes of which, by a graceful treatment, form as it were a frame for the group depicted within. Neptune and Antiope figure in the third room; the fourth exhibits a man of colossal size, in a state of the most intense nervous agitation. The unearthly group of fantastic, uncanny, sea monsters that surround him, at once put us in mind of poor Proteus engaged in tending his unruly herd. The walls were coated with delicate slabs of the rarest marbles, with a zone of *rosso antico* above, the scattered fragment still remaining attesting the magnificence of the whole. A slab of *porta santa* is still to be found near the leaden pipes that conveyed the water to the baths.

But who were the inmates of this dwelling? Who were they to whose splendid ease these baths once ministered? What their tastes? their histories? their lives? To their tastes nothing beyond what we have described remains to witness, save a marble head crowned with laurel, two heads of aged women, and some crushed fragments of a large and exquisitely chiselled statue. Of themselves we know nothing. In this less fortunate than the very bricks of the walls, which still bear impressed upon them the mark of the furnace in which they were burned, the owners of this place have left no certain traces of themselves behind. There are, indeed, some handfuls of ashes in the mortuary urns close by, but who shall say whether they belong to master or to slave? All that remains of the history of Ficulea and of its long career of activity is written in shattered mosaics, mutilated marbles, and human ashes. F. CARTON.

## RAPHAEL AND MICHEL ANGELO.

THE family Farnese had built a splendid and costly villa on the bank of the Tiber, and Cardinal Farnese, on succeeding to its possession, requested Raphael to undertake the fresco-painting on the walls of the *salons*. The great artist for a long time refused the task, but his Eminence having won the intercession of the *Fornarina*, Raphael consented, and promised to employ all his talents in the work, under the condition, however, that none should be allowed to look at it before its completion.

It is well known that the rivalry existing between the two artists had at last degenerated into actual jealousy, and that there were at that time not a few among the connoisseurs at Rome who preferred the grace and beauty of Raphael's paintings to the powerful productions of the gigantic genius of his rival. Michel Angelo was aware of the fact, and his excitable and haughty temper often betrayed him into malicious tricks against Raphael. When the villa paintings were in course of rapid progress, nothing else was then talked of at Rome. Some spoke with enthusiasm of the "Banquet of the Gods and the Union of Psyche;" others were inexhaustible in praise of the beautiful "Galatea," while each and all expressed a desire and curiosity to know what Angelo would say of them.



All these rumours and praises of a work that nobody had as yet seen, and few only knew by name, having reached the ears of the jealous Angelo, he swore by Dante's "Inferno" to use all the means in his power, fair and foul, to obtain a glimpse of the work in the villa, and to injure it beyond redemption. At that period Raphael was so enamoured of his *Fornarina* that he spent whole days in her company, and never dreamt of taking up his professional brush, while he hardly ever made his appearance at the villa before noon-time. One morning Michel Angelo rose early, disguised himself as an *acqua vitario* (spirit-hawker), took a basket filled with biscuits and *liqueurs* to the villa, where his cry, "Liqueurs, liqueurs!" soon brought down from the ladders within all the masons and labourers who were still employed in the interior of the structure. They opened the front door and invited the seller

to bring in his wares. Leaving his basket in their hands, Angelo made his way to the *salons*, and, passing from room to room, he took a rapid survey of the various paintings, but remained fixed with admiration before the yet unfinished "Galatea." Observing an empty spot in the centre of the picture, he took up a piece of charcoal, mounted the scaffold, and drew in the vacant space a colossal head of Jupiter. He then left the villa by one of the side doors, forgetting his basket and wares in the fullness of his mischievous joy. At noon Raphael appeared, and no sooner had he caught sight of the magnificent head of Jupiter in the centre of his "Galatea," than he exclaimed, "Michel Angelo! Michel Angelo!" and left the villa never to re-enter it. The work remained unfinished by him, and the mischievous head is still preserved under a glass, and excites the admiration of artists and *connoisseurs*.

given with that of the casting of the Florence gates, which was in the year 1330.

The catastrophe contemplated would also deprive the world of another very curious and perhaps unique monument of the customs and manners of the centuries immediately following the tenth. At the principal entrance of the church is, as usual, a marble vase for holy water. But the form of that at Palaia is peculiar, being something between a mortar and a bushel measure. In fact, the venerable stone vessel was destined to a double use, mixing up functions of a spiritual and profane nature in a strange way, highly characteristic of those "ages of faith." Around the massive rim of the vessel, deeply cut in large gothic letters, may be read this inscription, "*Hæc est mensura vini de Palaia, quæ debet impleri usque huc, facta tempore Domini Hubaldi.*" "This is the wine measure of Palaia, which must be filled up to here,—made in the time of the Lord Hubald." And it may be read among the ancient statutes of the municipality of Palaia still extant, that the inhabitants of that commune were bound to measure their wine in that measure, and pay a fee to the church on each measure for the use of it. The temporal power of the venerable stone has long since departed from it: but it is still discharging its spiritual functions to the very few who come near it, now that its mere mundane uses are at an end.

In the interior of the town there is another small church in which we found a work of art, the existence of which is worth recording inasmuch as I cannot find that it has been recorded elsewhere. On the principal altar behind, and in part concealed by modern woodwork, is a range of figures by Luca della Robbia, in his best style and manner. They are thirteen in number, each occupying a separate slab about two feet and a-half by about a foot wide. As in almost all the works of Luca himself, distinguished from those of his nephews, no colour is used save blue. The figures are white on a fine deep blue ground. They are admirable for grace and expression. As there is a book professing to give a complete catalogue of the extant works of Luca, whose author has failed to discover this one lurking in the obscurity of this remote little church, it is as well to supplement the list by this note.

From Palaia a walk of about six miles through a country similarly characterised to that which we had before traversed, but in which the character described becomes less strongly marked as the main valley of the Arno is approached, brought us to the railway again at the station of San Romano, and once more the iron horse combined for us a ramble through districts rarely visited with the comfort of supper and beds in Florence.

T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.

## TUSCAN NOOKS AND BYE-PATHS.

A SYSTEM of railways affords admirable facilities for the thorough exploration of a country to those who know how to use it judiciously. To the great mass of travellers it has, on the contrary, the effect of rendering all districts, save those actually traversed by the iron line, more completely unknown than they were in the old days of jog-trot locomotion. The termini of railways are great cities. And the ease and luxury with which we are whirled from one central point of curiosity and attraction to another bids fair to make us less acquainted than ever with all else than the cities of the lands we travel through, unless for those who will make the staff and wallet supplementary to the iron horse. Florence is not altogether an unknown city. The railway journey thence from Leghorn is not quite unbeaten ground to English travellers. But of all the thousands who have traversed it within the last ten years, I would wager much more than I should like to lose, that not ten have enjoyed the "excrescence" from the beaten track, which I am about to describe as desirable paralipomena to the red-book, which despotically guides the travelling Briton on his course.

Did the English traveller ever hear of the town of Vinci? No. How should he, since the omniscient red-book ignores the existence of any such spot. But Leonardo da Vinci, he has heard of? "Altro!" "I should think so;" as the Tuscan phrase may be rendered colloquially; the exact translation being "other;" quasi dicat—"other than that!"—"something more than that." Well, Leonard of Vinci took that name from his birth-place, a little town at the foot of the Monte Albano, not seven miles from Empoli, on the left-hand of the railway going to Florence.

Empoli, the reader will remember, because it is a first-class station on the railroad. The Monte Albano, too, our railway-traveller has probably never heard of; but has a vague idea that it is somewhere near Rome.

The Tuscan Monte Albano, my dear sir, is that long mass of mountain, rising to the height of about two thousand feet, which bounds the valley of the Arno on your left, as you speed Florenceward. The upper part of it is bathed in an ineffably lovely purple light by the setting sun; and below, the deepening shadows in the ravines, that score the long flank of the mountain, climbing upwards with the inexorable rapidity of a twilightless southern night, are chequered by the lights that rest on prominent knolls covered with fruit-laden chesnuts. Do they not look inviting—those deep-green villa-studded recesses of the hills?

Should you not like a ramble among their greenery? and, at the same time, a visit to the old-

world little town perched on a knoll between two ravines next the mountain's foot, where the encyclopædic Leonardo received his earliest impressions of this fair earth's forms and colours? If so, the best way to manage it will be thus. We won't quit the train at Empoli. You are looking to take your ease in your inn at Florence to-night. And assuredly you would take no ease in any hostelry at Empoli. Complete your journey to Florence, and when you have settled yourself comfortably in your quarters there, we will have a day among the hill-tops and sides of Monte Albano.

The early morning train on its way from Florence to Leghorn leaves the former city about seven, supposing our excursion to take place in September—the month of months for rambling in Italy—and drops us at Signa, the second station on its road. At this point the Arno quits the broad basin at the upper end of which Florence is situated, and enters a defile of the hills. The magnificent basin in question extends in an unbroken level of extreme fertility far away to the north-west, some twelve miles to the city of Prato, and eight or nine more beyond it to the city of Pistoia, both independent republics in the olden time. But all the portion of it beyond Signa, at which point the Arno quits it, is not the valley of the Arno, but that of the Ombrone, a turbulent and frequently mischievous stream which comes down from the chestnut-covered mountains behind Pistoia. It was at the defile of Signa, that, in the fourteenth century, Castruccio Castracani, the celebrated chieftain of Lucca, the greatest captain of his day, and a terrible thorn in the side of fair Florence, conceived the notable idea of building such a dyke across the course of the river, as should have the effect of drowning the cities of Florence, Prato, and Pistoia at one fell swoop!

I do not know what Stephenson or Brunel might have said as to the practicability of the scheme. But as the fall of the river in that part of its course, which lies between Florence and Empoli, is less than three feet in a mile, and the distance is only seven miles, the height of wall necessary for such a purpose would be nothing very considerable. To construct a dyke of sufficient strength for the purpose would have been a work of very much time, and its success would seem to depend on the condition,—that the men of the three great cities to be drowned should sit quietly watching the progress of the work. In any case the great Ghibelline captain did not add this colossal scheme for destruction to his other claims to immortal honour, but contented himself with burning and utterly destroying the town, castle, and bridge of Signa; as is testified by a Latin inscription still legible over one of the gates. The date of this destruction was 1236.

The little town of Signa occupies the south-easternmost spur of the Monte Albano; if indeed the knoll on which it stands can be called so, cut off as it is from the rest of the mountain by the Ombrone, which passes through a deep gorge just before it falls into the Arno. Beginning our walk therefore by climbing this buttress of the mountain, we have to descend again to cross the Ombrone, before we begin in earnest our ascent.

"Proibbito di battere a stormo!" we read,

painted in huge letters on the wall of a farm-yard a little before crossing the Ombrone. "Forbidden to raise the country by an alarm!"—a reasonable, but one would have thought needless, prohibition in this quiet rural district. But the legend is, and may probably remain for a few generations a sign of the recent times of Tuscany.

In the months which followed the bowing-out of our grand duke, one of the favourite but very weak devices of the enemy was to endeavour to raise false alarms in the country, to persuade the simple countryfolks that "the Austrians were upon them!" and thus to create disturbances which it was hoped might spread, and which if the confusion caused by such means could be made to lead to nothing better, might at least lend some appearance of support to the assertion that Tuscany was neither tranquil nor contented. The inscription will in all probability remain where we saw it, till it needs an antiquary to explain its meaning, and may come to be regarded as a curious memorial of times, which will appear scarcely realisable to our descendants a hundred years hence.

The Ombrone crossed by an ancient bridge, we follow a very steep but carriageable, or at least gigable, road circling the side of the mountain, which brings us to the old Medicean Villa of Artimino, at an elevation of about eight hundred feet above the valley. The situation is a remarkable one for the very extensive view it commands over the upper part of the Florentine basin, and up to the hills and convent of Vallombrosa in one direction—over the lower part of the same basin, with the cities of Prato and Pistoia, and the chestnut-covered Pistoian mountains in the background, in a second—and over the lower valley of the Arno as far as the Pisan hills in a third.

In the old days, when Italians were by their interminable quarrels and internecine wars between city and city preparing the way for the three hundred years of slavery and tyranny from which they are just emerging, there was a castle or fortified village up here belonging to the Pistoians, and forming one of their outpost bulwarks against their neighbours the Florentines. Of course, therefore, Artimino has a long chapter of history belonging to it, was taken, re-taken, and taken again. When all this disorder had in due course prepared the way for "order" under the absolute sway of the Medicean dynasty, there remained a mere skeleton of long-since gutted walls. At the foot of the hill, in the direction of Prato, one of the most prominent objects in the landscape is the huge Medicean Villa of Poggio a Caiano, the well-known scene of the extraordinary death of Duke Francis and his celebrated Duchess Bianca Capello. In all probability his brother, the Cardinal Ferdinand, poisoned them both. The circumstances of their death, however, are mysterious and doubtful. At all events Ferdinand succeeded his brother, and was wont to take his pleasure at Poggio a Caiano quite as agreeably as if no such tragedy had, whether by his own instrumentality or not, been enacted there. Upon one occasion, when staying there, his highness, while hunting on Monte Albano, made a halt before the crumbling walls of the old castle, and turning to his architect Bernardo Buon-talenti, who was among his suite: "Bernardo,"

said he, "just on this spot where I now stand, I must have a palace large enough to accommodate me and my whole court. Set to work, therefore, and do not be long about it."

So the present Villa of Artimino was built, and was ready to receive its guests in 1594. Leopold the First afterwards gave the mansion, together with large estates extending down into the valley beneath it, to the Marchese Bartolommei; and the property is now held by an English lady, the widow of the last Marchese.

A more delightful spot for a summer retreat from the heat of Florence, when the flagstones begin to be warmed through, cannot be conceived. It has what the villas of the Valdarno are apt to be deficient in, plenty of wood around it, chiefly holm-oak, good for shelter, for shade, and for picturesque beauty of form and colouring. The house, a vast square building, consisting of ground-floor, *piano nobile*, or first-floor, and garrets, must have afforded ample accommodation, one would have thought, without the range of buildings at some little distance, pointed out as the lodging of the pages and courtiers. The arrangement of the building affords a curious instance of the slowness with which the habits of domestic life were wont in those slow-going times to suit themselves to new circumstances, however palpable the advantages to be obtained from the change. When Buontalenti built this villa for Duke Ferdinand, it was no longer necessary that a prince's dwelling-house should be constructed with a view to security from attack. Yet no other motive can account for the sacrifice of all the convenience and beauty entailed by the abandonment of the ground-floor to offices, carriage-houses, or mere emptiness. A range of small prison-like barred windows all round the lower part of the building indicate that nearly one half the space of the huge mass was put to no better purpose. Indeed provision is made to enable the noble owners to avoid even passing through that part of their mansion. A large flight of double steps on one side of the palace leads to an open *loggia* or arcade which forms the entrance to the *piano nobile*, or part of the mansion occupied by its masters. The result is that no attempt has been made to adorn the space immediately around the house.

It stands in the midst of an open esplanade bounded by the woods above mentioned. This space is occupied entirely by coarse, unmown, uncared-for herbage, growing up to the very foot of the walls beneath the prison-like windows. Yet with the aid of the fine old woods, and especially of one or two magnificent old patriarch holm-oaks in the foreground, and the enchanting views that might be obtained by a little judicious opening of vistas, it would be easy to transform this space into the most charming gardens. But then for the due enjoyment of them it would be necessary to get rid of the Newgate-looking windows, and cut the apertures down to the ground.

But a serene eminence who opens his way to a throne by drugging his brother and sister-in-law, naturally prefers iron-barred windows to flower-beds, and very probably agreed in opinion with a recent grand-ducal minister in Florence, who would not permit a newly-made piazza in the

city to be planted with trees, because "it was injurious to public morality," seeing that the trunks of them might serve to conceal an assassin while waiting for his victim! The minister thus careful of the public morality dwelt himself on the piazza in question.

Leaving Artimino behind us, and following the crest of the mountain in its direction towards the north-west—a walk of some five or six miles, always ascending more or less, brings us to the culminating point of the Monte Albano range at a place called Pietra Marina, an elevation of about 1800 feet above the level of the sea. A huge rock, projecting through the thin and scanty soil, has given the place the first half of its name, while it owes the second part of it probably to the fact, that the sea beyond Leghorn is visible from it. Those who are used to mountain rambling must often have observed that the extent of view from an eminence depends more on the circumstances of its position relatively to the surrounding country than to its own elevation. And Pietra Marina is a strong instance in point. The height is nothing considerable; but the extent of view from it is very remarkable. From Mount Falterona, the highest of the Tuscan Apennines, and the tops close under which both Arno and Tiber take their rise on the one hand, the eye ranges to the islands of Elba and Gorgona on the other. A small building has been erected on the summit for pic-nicking and such like purposes by the sovereign owners of Poggio a Caiano, far in the valley beneath. Together with the sovereignty of Tuscany, that of these four walls has now passed into new hands; and, in sign of ownership, some zealous hand had already blazoned the arms of Savoy on the white-washed walls over the door. But some other equally zealous adherent of fallen fortunes had given vent to his legitimist sympathies by defacing the new painting. The "reactionist" had not, however, been allowed to have the last word. For lower on the wall, beneath the insulted emblem, might be read, "Morte ai codini!"—"Death to the pig-tailed fogies!"—the holding of anti-national opinions being (poetically) supposed to be confined to such old-world superannuated slow-coaches as are characterised to the popular mind by the wearing of the tail so dear to our grandfathers. The "codini" are our Jacobites.

We called a halt, drew forth our cigars, and sat down to enjoy the grand panorama beneath us. The day, though not a favourable one for a bird's-eye observation of the distant parts of the immense horizon, was especially so for adding all the accidental beauties of contrasted light and shade to the landscape. Heavy masses of black clouds, threatening rain, were playing at hide-and-seek with a brilliant Italian sun. There was a good deal of wind too; and as the purple darkness was ever and anon rolled back by it, and the unmitigated sunlight suffered to illuminate one portion of the panorama after another, Florence, Prato, Pistoia, Empoli, were in turn brought out clear and sparkling in the midst of a surrounding setting of dim and uncertain depths of indigo-coloured cloud.

About fifty yards from the spot on which we



had perched ourselves, a couple of bare-legged lads of fourteen or fifteen were sitting, apparently in charge of some very lean and ragged-looking sheep which were gleaming a scanty meal on the stony hill-side below us. The elder was industriously employed in plaiting straw as fast as his fingers could shape it. The younger, as handsome a young dog as ever looked the very personification of idleness, had also his bunch of straw attached to his jacket; but he made no pretence of doing anything with it. While his elder silently plied his task, he drew from his wallet an enormous slice of bread, although it was not yet nearly mid-day, and sat slowly munching it, and staring at the extraordinary phenomenon presented to him by our presence there with the quiet, impassive, contemplative look in his great black eyes of a ruminating bullock. A peasant from one of the little Hill-villages above the Baths of Lucca once told me that there was no such thing as a watch or clock in his "paese," but that it was always considered mid-day when the "paroco"—the village priest—was hungry, for he always then ordered the bell for noon to be rung. I suppose the young shepherd on Pietra Marina made it noon from observations of the same sort.

At the further, that is the north-westernmost, extremity, the Monte Albano rises into another somewhat less elevated point, called St. Alluccio from an ancient tower, the remains of a hermitage which once stood there. The walk from one of these points to the other is a very fine one of some four miles along the crest of the mountain. In some parts the waters have washed away the mountain sides till a mere ridge remains, so that a traveller ascending from the lower valley of the Arno might almost shake hands with one climbing from the valley of the Ombrone, before either of them had quite reached the summit of the backbone which separates them. A peripatetic lecture on the old history of Tuscany might be given here with advantage, so storied are the hills, valleys, towns, and hamlets which lie beneath the eye on either side. From the great battle of Altopascio, in which the Florentines suffered defeat at the hands of the men of Lucca in the fourteenth century, to the half-serious, half-horsey-play raids of commune against commune, as shown in the chronicles of St. Miniato and Empoli, all the life and history of the mediæval communities might be illustrated with references to the localities spread out around and beneath on all sides. The ill-famed site of the great defeat of Altopascio lies in the valley to the right, Empoli on the Arno, and more distant St. Miniato, with its crown of lofty towers, in that to the left. The legend of the quarrel between Empoli and St. Miniato is a curious specimen of the sort of half-earnest, half-jocose feuds which were common when war was the business and playing at war was the recreation of men's lives. In reply to some bragging menace of the Empolitans, the men of St. Miniato—which is situated on the hill on the other side of the Arno—had replied that not a man of Empoli should ascend their hill till an ass was seen flying through the air. To which the Empoli heroes replied, that such a sight *should* be seen ere long; but that they would have the key of St. Miniato

town-gate without a man of theirs mounting the hill to fetch it—a boast which was thus made good. On the first dark night a large number of goats, with lanterns tied to their horns, were driven in long procession up the steep hill-side beneath the walls of St. Miniato by the girls of Empoli. The unaccountable appearance of these bobbing and dancing lights coming up the hill was at once attributed by the Samminiatesi to the source to which everything unaccountable was attributed in those days—the Devil. A general panic seized on the inhabitants. The clergy, who were the only class likely to know better, of course found their account in the Devil's habitual interference with men's affairs, and encouraged all such delusions. Everybody hastened either to shut himself into his own house, or to escape from the city in the opposite direction. The gate towards the enemy was left guardless, and the Empoli girls took possession of the keys and carried them back in triumph to their husbands and lovers. The next day Empoli sent an embassy to St. Miniato, to say that if the men of St. Miniato would favour them with their company at a festival on the day of Corpus Domini, then near at hand, they should, on request, have back their keys, and see an ass flying through the air. The invitation was accepted, and the boast made good by throwing a luckless donkey from the top of the lofty church tower into the piazza. The brutal joke was thought so good an one, that it has been repeated ever since on the anniversary of that day. Modern humanity has not been able to persuade the Empolitans to abandon the "peculiar institution" of their city; but it has succeeded in introducing a compromise, by virtue of which the hapless donkey is not *thrown*, but run down by a rope and pulley from the top of the tower.

But the sites which lie around Monte Albano are suggestive not only of memories of battles and feuds, though these occupy here as elsewhere the largest portion, alas! of human history. Altopascio is not famous only for its great battle, but also as being the cradle and earliest seat of the knights hospitallers, whose institute became spread over all Europe. And beneath us on the opposite side of the hill—the Valdarno side, that is—lies Vinci, the birthplace of one of Nature's special favourites. Shall we descend from our vantage point by the side of old St. Alluccio's bleak tower to the northwards, traverse the plain on which the great battle was fought, and so make our way back to Florence by the Lucca and Pistoia railroad? Or shall we find our way down the steep wood-clothed flank of the mountain on the Valdarno side, and visit Leonardo's birthplace, thence crossing the valley to Empoli, and so to Florence by the Leghorn rail? The second scheme was quickly decided on, *nem. con.* The interest attaching to memorials of one of the great creating intellects of the world outweighed that offered by reminiscences of destruction on however large a scale.

Besides, the appearance of the little town itself as it lay far beneath us, bright as the sunshine rested on its white walls amid the embowering chesnuts and vines, was in itself exceedingly attractive. So we began our descent on Vinci.

The first portion of this was accomplished by a dash in a direct line down the mountain side through a thick copse-wood of chesnut, the young branches of which lent us a very welcome aid in coming down a slope steeper than any house-roof. But we soon fell into a road cut along the hill-side, of which we were fain to avail ourselves, though doubting whether it would lead us to our object. The hamlets and townlets scattered over the Tuscan hill-sides are so numerous and so much like one another, and so unlike themselves when seen from a different point of view from that from which you have first observed them, that, in making for any one of them across the country, one is apt to be misled by mistaking one tower and cluster of houses for another. But Vinci is too distinctively marked to be mistaken. The black and sturdy tower of its ancient castle, and the white and slender tower of its church rising side by side, distinguish it from every neighbouring tower and town. The site, too, is peculiar. It stands perked up, bright and clear-looking, on a knoll between two dark-green richly-wooded ravines, the last protuberance of the mountain before its base meets the fertile flat of the valley.

A very pleasant walk, at first through chesnut woods, then through olive groves, and lastly between corn-fields divided, sheltered, and festooned with vines, brought us duly down to the neck between the two ravines, over which was the entrance to the town. It was about one o'clock, the hour of the siesta; and the city of the Arabian Nights, where all the inhabitants were turned to stone, could not have been more deadlly still and life-abandoned. We had breakfasted at six; and had been on foot nearly ever since. We were intent, therefore, on finding a hostelry of some sort. But we traversed the entire town without seeing the smallest sign of "entertainment." Surely, there must be a *café* in the place, we said. The inhabitants could no more exist without one, than without water. At last we descried an ostler-looking sort of man sitting, in his shirt-sleeves, on a door-step; and asked him if there were such an establishment in Vinci. Our appearance and our demand seemed to occasion him the most overwhelming astonishment. He contemplated us for a minute in speechless wonder, and then with a profound yawn called another man from the house, who was equally astonished, and who equally yawned before he could bring his mind to bear on the extraordinary circumstances before him. A consultation then took place in an undertone between these two representative men of Vinci, from which I gathered that they were coming to the conclusion that for the honour of the town it would be better to take the strangers to the house of a gentleman in the neighbourhood! A strong protest was immediately entered against any such measure; and a second petition put forward for direction to something of the nature of a *café*, however humble. Thereupon the second man got himself into motion, and led us to a sort of general shop in the main thoroughfare of the place, to which a little room, with three or four marble-covered tables denoting its destination, was attached.

"Lemonade?"

"No lemons."

"*Café au lait*?"

"No milk!"

Coffee, however, and bread were forthcoming; and our morning's work made this somewhat meagre fare very acceptable.

While we were discussing it, the little *café* gradually filled with citizens of Vinci anxious to look at the strangers, whose arrival had already, it was evident, become known to the community. They did not affect to disguise their object by ordering anything in the *café* for their own consumption, but looked on at the progress of our meal with the greatest, and it must be added, most benevolent interest. For if a bit more bread was wanted, or a second cup, or rather tumbler of coffee (such being the mode of taking it in humble houses in Italy), two or three of the spectators would start up to procure it. Having somewhat satisfied our hunger and thirst, we asked if any conveyance was to be had to carry us to Empoli, a distance of six or seven miles. No reply was made in words, but one of our guard of honour went off, and in a minute returned with an old man, who was presented as the livery-stable keeper of Vinci.

"Had he a 'bagarino' (a little light four-wheeled gig), and a horse that he could send to Empoli?"

"Gnor, no! ma c'è un baroccino sulle cigne, e un cavallo come se ne vedono pochi, ma pochi davvero;" which is Tuscan for, "No, sir. But we have a cart on straps, and a horse such as one rarely sees, but rarely in truth."

The *baroccino sulle cigne* is a vehicle consisting of a huge pair of wheels, an axle and pair of long poles, connected by two shorter cross-bars. The part between the two cross-bars constitutes the body of the carriage, and the projecting remainder of the poles the shafts. A stout net-work of rope is attached to the four sides of the frame that has been described; a mat is supported by this, and forms the bottom destined to support the feet. A strong iron arm, some eighteen inches long, is erected in a vertical position from the four corners of the frame; and two strong straps, *cigne*, are suspended from the tops of these irons, one from front to back on the off side, and the other on the near side. On these, about the middle of their length, a seat is fixed; and they to a certain degree do the work of springs. The seats thus placed may be increased to any number that can be placed on the straps; and I have seen as many as sixteen persons accommodated on four seats, and thus carried on one pair of wheels. Such is a *baroccino sulle cigne*.

Well! how much was asked for taking us to Empoli on the *baroccino* with the peerless horse? Three pauls, about sixteen pence, was the sum demanded for the six miles. It must be owned that, if the steed might have been more than matched without looking far for his peer, the modesty of his owner's demand was of rare quality. So the *baroccino* negotiation was concluded; and we proceeded to the next point of our business.

"Did any one there happen to know the name of one Leonardo da Vinci?"

"Altro! altro! altro!" a whole chorus of *altros*. Every man there should rather think that he *had* heard of one bearing that name. Could any of

them point out the house in which the great painter, poet, architect, mechanic had been born? Of course they all knew it; knew all about him, his fame, his birth, and story. For whatever a Tuscan peasant is ignorant of, and he is profoundly ignorant of most things, he is rarely uninformed of the glories of his country's palmy time. We soon learned that the house in question was not in the town, was about a mile and a half from it in the direction of the mountain, on a farm called Anchiano. We had, in fact, passed very near it, as we came down from St. Alluccio.

"Who was willing to earn a paul by accompanying us to the spot?"

The lounging, ostler-like man, our first acquaintance in Vinci, who seemed to have nothing on earth to do, declared that his avocations were too pressing to permit his having that honour. But a blacksmith, a fine, strapping fellow, some six feet two or three in his stockings, volunteered to be our cicerone. And charging the owner of the *baroccino* to have the peerless steed ready in harness in about an hour, we started on our path up the hill again.

"We shall have a glass of wine, or two, this year," he remarked, as he pointed out the abundant crop of all but ripe grapes in the vineyards through which we were passing. "Not that the malady has ever been so bad on this hillside, as it has in many parts of the country. We grow the Trebbiano grape here chiefly, and our wine is as good as any grown on the Chianti hills; ay, better; and worth two *lire* the flask every drop of it" (about sixpence a bottle). "Here we come on the farm where the professor was born."

"Il professore," he called the great artist; as did all the Vinci people in speaking of their celebrated townsman. "Il maestro," the term would have been in his own day; and the change marks curiously the artist's progress in social estimation and pretension, which has been contemporaneous with his decline in artistic worth and merit. For, though, etymologically, he who claims to be a *master* in any art, makes a higher pretension than he who calls himself merely a *professor* of it, yet the former title was in the great days of art shared by the artist with the master tradesmen of any other craft. His "studio" was a "bottega," a shop to all intents and purposes; and he was the "master" of a picture manufactory. The master mason, or master carpenter is still "il maestro;" but the line which modern reverence for head-work, as distinguished from hand-work, has drawn between the artist and the artisan, has in Italy classed the former with other academic personages of all kinds, and dubs him "professor" accordingly.

"Here," says our blacksmith cicerone, "is the house, a peasant's dwelling now, as it was a peasant's dwelling then. For our Leonardo, you know, was born a peasant. His mother lived in that house; but not his father. He was a lawyer, and lived in Vinci. He had a wife, too, and other sons in Vinci. But it was only the farm-girl's child that the world has heard of."

There stood the Tuscan farm-house before us, amid its olives, figs, corn-fields, and vineyards, evidently just as it stood four hundred years ago;

and the inmates were around it occupied with the same cares, and busied with the same labours, with one notable exception. The Indian corn culture, which now makes so conspicuous and characteristic a part of Tuscan rural economy, could have contributed no part to the scene in 1452—the year of Leonardo's birth. At present it is one of the most picturesque features in the appearance of a Tuscan farm. Whether the *contadino* family be engaged in gathering the huge ears from the stalks in the field, while the primitively constructed red cart with its pair of great dove-coloured Juno-eyed oxen, and a coarse white sheet at the bottom of it, to save the grain that may be shaken from the full ears, waits its load hard by; or whether, somewhat later in the year, each farm-house is seen clad from eaves to foundations with a rich red-gold coloured robe, formed of tiers of the ripe maize strung one over the other on the walls to harden in the sun; or whether the whole strength of the family be seen engaged, as was the case before us, on the esplanade of concrete prepared for this purpose in front of the dwelling, in stripping the yellow-red grain from the ear-stalks—each stage of the Indian corn harvest is picturesque and characteristic.

With this exception, the house and its surroundings were before us just as they must have appeared to Ser Pietro, the well-to-do Vinci lawyer, when he used to come up the hill to the farm to visit the pretty Caterina, who became the great "professor's" mother. A remarkably pretty successor in "her place" was not wanting to complete the similarity of the scene. Having saluted the group at work in shucking the maize in front of the house, who seemed at once to understand our motive in coming there, and courteously bade us enter the open door, we found Caterina's nineteenth century representative busied in the same cares as must have occupied her predecessor. But either from an improvement in *contadina* morality, or from the difference existing between a blacksmith and a lawyer, some manifestation of rural gallantry on the part of our cicerone was rewarded by a resounding slap on the handsome face of the tall gallant, the little Lucretia jumping fairly off her feet to inflict it. But both the offence and its chastisement seemed to fall perfectly within the recognised limits of rural *persiflage*; and passed with perfect good humour on both sides. While we were examining the two large rooms and outhouse, which form the ground story of the house, and remarking that although the tiles, which formed the ceiling, had evidently been renewed at no very distant date, the beams exhibited unmistakeable manifestations of great antiquity, the head of the family came in, and very courteously begged us to satisfy our curiosity without stint. His house, and more especially its plenishing in all kinds, was immeasurably inferior to that of a farmer of similar standing in our own country. But it must be owned that his bearing and manner, the easy unembarrassed courtesy of his hospitality, and his intelligent appreciation of the interest we took in the locality, were as far to the advantage of the Tuscan as compared with the British small farmer. Three spacious rooms up-stairs, under the tiles,

completed the dwelling, which evidently must always have been, as it is now, of a very humble order. Yet it had, and still has, over the door of entrance a coat of arms cut in stone, with a smaller carving on either side of it, one representing a tower, which is the bearing of the Bardi family, and the other the Giglio of the Florentine republic. In one of these five rooms the infant Leonardo first opened his eyes, and saw above them these identical bare old beams, beneath which so many births and deaths have since then followed each other. But little of suggestion can be got from the fact, that the eyes, which had in them the capacity of becoming so exquisitely appreciative of beauty in every kind, cast their earliest glances on bare rafters and tiles, rather than on gilded ceilings. Not so, however, of the outdoor scenery, among which the encyclopædic genius passed his earliest and most impressionable years. Admirable and intensely Tuscan are the views from the space in front of the house. Behind these are the mountains with their stony sides and friable soil covered with chesnut coppice wherever the plants can find a few feet of earth, with their wonderful atmospheric colouring, matching in turn every tint of the "Claude glass," and with their multiplicity of little hill-side churches and villas, each with its three or four tall cypresses around it. In front, there is a profusion of all the riches that make Tuscany the garden of Italy; a land not only flowing with wine, and oil, and corn, but actually producing them all contemporaneously from the same field, with figs and peaches added into the bargain. Below them is the wide valley of the Arno, with the town of Vinci, and its black, dungeon keep,—besieged, defended, taken and retaken again and again. This was the world of which those exquisitely adjusted perceptive faculties first took cognizance; and those who remember the bits of landscape which the great painter was so fond of introducing into his pictures, will be struck by the reminiscences of the scenery here spread before him, which are often to be traced on his canvas.

On returning to Vinci, we found our *baroccino* awaiting us, and having with some little difficulty scrambled into its seat, started on our way to Empoli. Just at the end of the little town, on the hill which the road descends to reach the flat of the Valdarno, there is a chapel, in which an altarpiece by Leonardo, painted by him in his youth for his native town, has been preserved. We were much disappointed by not being able to see it. The chapel was shut, and the sacristan, who had the key, was absent. This was the sole *contretemps* which occurred during our little excursion. The peerless steed did his six miles nobly in an hour and a quarter; and the rail took us up at Empoli, and brought us to Florence in comfortable time for dinner. T. ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE.



## TUSCAN NOOKS AND BYE-PATHS.—II.

THERE is a Tuscan city, which every foreign visitor in Tuscany sees, but which none visits ;—none, or, at all events, not one in ten thousand. It may be, too, that equally exceptionally strangers may have avoided seeing it. For they may have slept in the railroad carriage, which carried them from Leghorn to Florence. In no other way could the city in question have escaped their observation ; for it forms a remarkable object on a hill by the side of the railway, about half-way between Pisa and Florence. Its name is San Miniato ; and its surname “Al Tedesco,” to distinguish it from the church and convent named after the same saint in the immediate neighbourhood of Florence. Nobody, as has been said, ever thinks of going up to San Miniato. Yet the queer little old city well deserves a visit ;—not certainly from those, who are hastening on to do “Florence in eight days,” as per guide-book ; but from any nook-and-byeway lover, who has a day at his disposal, not imperatively dedicated to the regular and recognised lions. Should any such be inclined to “attempt the adventure,” he must cause himself to be put down by the railroad at the little roadside station of San Pierino, the next to that of Empoli on the Leghorn side. Thence a walk of two miles, the last of them being a steep ascent, will bring the traveller to the gateway of the city ;—that same gateway, the keys of which were stolen by the Empoli girls, as narrated in a previous paper. If the “adventurer” should object to even the short walk, he will find the San Miniato mail waiting at the arrival of the morning train from Florence ; and the two miserable but willing little steeds, and the shaky old berline, which perform this duty, will for a small consideration drag him in process of time to the top. If he be an Englishman, however, he will hardly endure to sit behind the panting little beasts as they breast the very steep ascent. An Italian or a Frenchman feels no mercy upon such occasions ; and has no idea of being “dupé,” to such a degree as to be led into using his own legs, when he has paid his money for being carried. On the bright September morning, on which we,—the writer and an English friend,—“made the ascent,” we left four able-bodied men being slowly and painfully dragged up the hill.

We came from Florence by the first train ; and, of course, could not travel the five-and-twenty miles or so, which brought us to San Pierino, without hearing and seeing symptoms of the doings

on which every man's mind is more or less occupied throughout the country. Our train carried a company of “bersaglieri,” or riflemen, on their way to join in the good work of liberating Umbria from the intolerable curse of priestly government. And the station-master at Empoli came to the door of our carriage with a tale, eagerly listened to by all present, of a convoy of prisoners, which had passed through on its way from Siena to Leghorn during the night :

“*Certi mus c' erano*,” “certain phizzes there were among them !” said the station-master, completing his meaning with one of those infinitely expressive grimaces and shrugs, with which a Tuscan can convey so significant a description. I fear that the faces which had so unfavourably impressed the Empoli station-master belonged to some of the Pope's bad Irish bargains.

The position of the city of San Miniato is a peculiar one. It is built on the narrow ridge of the mountain, extending for somewhat more than a mile in a semicircular sweep. Towards the centre of this curved back-bone an excrescence juts out from it, and rises a hundred feet or so above the level of the rest of the ridge. A small, irregular-shaped platform occupies the summit of this ; and was the site of a strong castle, now utterly destroyed and even effaced, with the exception of a tall, slender, ragged, red-brick tower, standing at the extreme edge of the level space, and looking as if a gust of wind would cause it to fall over upon the city below it. It is this lofty and isolated tower with its ragged summit, visible far and wide over the lower Valdarno, which attracts the eyes of all travellers along the line of rail below. It is one of those sites evidently predestined to have a castle upon it ; and in all probability, there was some building of the sort here before the castle, of which this tower is the sole remnant, was built by the Emperor Frederick the Second. That great emperor and ferocious barbarian resided for a while at San Miniato during his visits to Italy ; and dated thence many documents still existing. [His son, Henry the Sixth also resided for some time at San Miniato ; as did likewise the Emperor Otho the Fourth in the year 1209. This also was the residence of the Imperial Vicars for Tuscany, who seem to have been sometimes Vicars with authority over all Italy. There was, therefore, abundant reason for calling the place *German's San Miniato*.

Few royal or imperial castles are unfurnished with reminiscences of deeds of the truly imperial stamp. The old red-brick tower at San Miniato has a notable tradition of the kind. Here it was that the celebrated chancellor of Frederick the Second, Pietro delle Vigne—Peter of the Vineyards—came to his miserable end. His eyes had been destroyed, as is well known, by his “august sovereign and master,” for some real or imagined offence. He had at all events served Frederick faithfully during all the years of his life ; and, therefore, in all probability, deserved, richly enough, that or any other punishment ; but not from the hand of his “royal master.” Local tradition tells, that the miserable man put an end to his life by beating his head against the wall of his prison, and points out even the spot

in the wall at which the catastrophe took place. With regard to such traditions it is to be observed, that the fictitious manufacture of them may be generally expected to occur under the same conditions which give rise to other manufactures,—a demand for them. In places which have become celebrated for their connection with any interesting passage of ancient story, which are visited by crowds of sightseers, and where the prosperity of guides and hotels depends on the excitement and satisfaction of the curiosity of the public, particular details of this sort may be expected to be invented. But where none of these conditions occur, and where an unexpected stranger receives the testimony of an immemorial tradition, handed down from one generation to another among a people little subject to removals or changes, and remarkably addicted to thinking and speaking of the facts and memories of their own local histories, such testimony may be accepted as very strong evidence of the truth.

We were fortunate enough to fall in, at San Miniato, with one of those humble votaries of Mnemosyne, whose culture of the learned muse, like their patriotism, limits itself within the horizon commanded by the church tower top of their native town—no very narrow area in the case of San Miniato—and who are so invaluable to a stranger when met with in the genuine unsophisticated state; and become so abominable when they have degenerated into professional *ciceroni*. Our San Miniato friend had a true Old Mortality reverence for every sculptured stone and storied wall in his native city, and a really extensive and accurate knowledge of its history. He could point out, as we stood on the platform once occupied by the castle, every tower and townlet that crowned the neighbouring hills, or studded the far-stretching vale of Arno, and he could tell when its men had been in feud with those of San Miniato, and how chatelains had been submitted to its jurisdiction, and distant churches placed under its ecclesiastical supremacy. San Miniato and its citizens are mortal: and must have had therefore, it must be supposed, reverses and misfortunes. But the patriotic memory of worthy Gaetano Banni was so constructed as to retain none such. And an unfortunate allusion by me to the story of the taking of the town-keys above alluded to was met by him not only with the most unqualified contradiction of the whole story, but with a torrent of proofs that it did not, and could not have happened. According to him, the legend originated solely in the invention of a burlesque poetaster of Empoli, who wrote little more than a hundred years ago. But the flight of the ass, I objected; that unquestionably may be witnessed any year on the feast of Corpus Domini? Yes, indeed; and was a signal proof of the brutality of the Empolani, but no proof at all of anything else.

This little mountain city of San Miniato is singularly remarkable for the constellation of great historic names of which it has been the cradle. And our Sanminiatense Old Mortality, Gaetano Banni, was perfectly well up in the family history and genealogical lore of his native place. He could run over a list of names well known in

Italian story, telling how this family had become extinct in such a year; how that had migrated and was still extant in such and such a city: how some last scion of another well-known name was yet to be found in some humble position among the citizens. He pointed out the old ancestral mansions which still remained, and the sites of those which had been destroyed. Some of these were names known not only to Italy but to the world. And it must be admitted that it is not a little singular to find such a triad of names as Sforza, Borromeo, and Buonaparte among the stars of the same obscure little Tuscan hill-city. The first of these, indeed, was of no Sanminiatense lineage, his father, Muzio Attendolo, being of Cutignola; being an illegitimate child, the great warrior was indeed of no lineage; but he was born at San Miniato of a mother belonging to the city, and the San Miniato chroniclers eagerly insist on this fact, and on the legal maxim, *partus sequitur ventrem*, as entitling them to consider the illegitimate founder of so illustrious a line as a fellow citizen of their own.

The Borromei family was of genuine San Miniato origin, and became extinct in that city only in 1672. The old family mansion is still to be seen there, with its long row of massive and gloomy-looking arched windows encased in heavy Tuscan "rustic" stone-work. The huge door stood open to the street, and gave glimpses of an interior more compatible with the residence of a saint than with that of an archbishop.

The Buonaparte family were as unquestionably citizens of San Miniato, and the existence of a long series of generations of them in the little city is attested by numerous memorials. But worthy Gaetano Banni was not altogether correct in representing them as of Sanminiatense origin. They existed in San Miniato early in the twelfth century. But the family may be traced to a still higher antiquity in Florence. Florence is undoubtedly the cradle of the Buonaparte race; and the earliest facts known of the family are to be found in the oldest Florentine chronicles. A few miles from Florence, on the then bridle-path leading to Rome, there was a very strong castle and is still a little hamlet called Monteboni. In that castle lived a race of barons, who infested that important road and levied contributions on travellers. Their deeds were such as made it necessary for them, and at the same time enabled them, to be generous to the Church; and we accordingly find still extant deeds of gift of lands to different monasteries bearing date 1041, 1083, and 1100, executed by these pious highwaymen in their castle of "Mons Boni." But, thirty-five years after the last of these dates, the predatory habits of the noble barons of Monteboni became so great a nuisance to the increasing commerce and traffic of the rising republic of Florence, that the citizens went out against the castle and razed it to the ground. After that, the lords of Monteboni became themselves citizens. But, on changing their lives, they changed also their name, and at the same time dividing into two branches became—one branch Buondelmonti, a name very celebrated in Florentine story, and the other branch Buonaparte. This second division of the

family has left a record of its existence in Florence in the family burying-vault in the church of San Pancrazio; but it does not seem to have remained long settled in that city. Subdividing itself again, one branch established itself at San Miniato, and the other at Sarzana, a little town near the coast, about half-way from Florence to Genoa. And I am afraid that it is clear—though San Miniato and Gaetano Banni won't hear of such a thing for an instant—that from this latter sprung the Corsican family, to which that descendant of the old Monteboni reiving barons who practised the ancient family maxims on an imperial scale belonged. For more than five hundred years, at all events, the family existed at San Miniato, for "Jacobus de Bonapartibus, Nobilis Miles et Prætor," is recorded to have died in 1294, by the inscription on a very modest little stone about a foot square in the north wall of the cathedral, near the door and close down to the ground. And in 1799 Napoleon of that ilk visited, at San Miniato, an aged canon of the name, then the last remaining scion of that branch of the race. Three ancient family mansions are pointed out as having all belonged to the family. One of them is, perhaps, the largest palace in the city, and another is indicated as that in which the old canon received for three days his great relative. The annals of the little city are full of notices of members of the family. There were no less than twenty-seven canons of the name, of one of whom there is a portrait in the sacristy. I cannot say that I was able to trace the slightest resemblance in the silly, smirking, vacant features to the well-known imperial lineaments.

It is impossible to quit San Miniato without descending one or other side of the steep hill, on which the city is built. We determined to do so on the opposite side to that by which we had climbed the hill, with a view of exploring a little of the country lying back from the railway, and separated from the Valdarno by the range of high grounds, on one culminating point of which San Miniato stands. The entire district is one of hill and valley, the former in no case so high as not to be entirely under cultivation, and the latter giving very evident signs of exceeding fertility. Olives and vines on the hill-sides, corn,—Indian corn chiefly,—and vines in the valleys, complete the old biblical picture of prosperity,—a land rich with "corn, wine, and oil." Yet with all this wealth of vegetation, the country is not a green country. The browns predominate to a degree, which gives a quite peculiar aspect to the landscape; the prevalence of this tint not being due as in so many localities to the scorching up of the vegetation by immoderate heat, but to the large amount of naked soil visible to the eye. And this peculiarity arises from a cause, the agencies of which are wide-spreading, various, and of infinite importance to the future prosperity and development of the resources of the country.

This predominance of brown tints in the face of the country suggests the idea of aridity. But to an eye accustomed to similar observations, one glance will suffice to show that the peculiar appearance and configuration of the district is due to the agency of water. The hill-sides are in

many places bare, not because the sun has burned up the vegetation, but because water has carried away the soil in such sort as to leave precipitous rifts and ravines incapable of cultivation, not on account of their sterility, but of their vertical position. The multitude of depressions in the earth's surface, from little rifts and gullies to the leading valleys have all evidently been excavated by water. All, or almost all valleys, it may be said, are so. But the peculiarity here is the rapidity with which water is doing its work. And yet the little streams at the bottoms of the larger valleys in these early autumnal days are creeping along mildly, and even lazily enough. And in the smaller ravines not a drop of water is to be seen. A single day's heavy rain, however, is sufficient to change the face of all this. The torpid little streams become in a few hours raging and mischievous torrents; each gully in the seamed and rifted sides of the hills is turned into a tumbling stream of turbid water charged heavily with earth. The peculiar character of this part of the Apennine range, even of the higher ridge of the mountains, is its extreme friability. Thousands of tons of the soil are carried by each passing summer shower, and millions of tons by each heavy winter rain, into the lowlands and into the streamlets, and by them into the Arno, still busily labouring to extend the vast flat plain, which it has within the last three or four hundred years deposited between Pisa and the sea. The Apennines are being rapidly cut down and spread out in the Mediterranean. Very rapidly; and in that consists the misfortune;—for a very serious misfortune it is. "Yes, the soil is fertile enough," said a *contadino* of the district, to whom I spoke on the subject; "the soil is rich; but who can tell whether he shall sow next year, where he has sown this; or even whether he shall ever reap at all, where he has sown! A little hard rain is enough to carry away a field." The Pisan plain is magnificently fertile; and though the construction of it causes marshes and malaria in the process, vast tracts are being prepared to feed the added millions of a not very remote posterity. But meantime the misfortune is a very serious one; and as usual, when the operations of nature are such, it has been caused by unwise and inconsiderate interference with her course of action. The rapidity with which this transformation is taking place is the misfortune. And this has been caused by the improvident denuding of the hills of their forests. The earth, which was brought away gradually by rains that fell on extensive forests, and were retained awhile by their leaves, is now swept down wholesale by the water which falls on the unprotected sides of the hills.

The country we were rambling over to the south-west of San Miniato illustrated the whole of this process in a very marked manner; and the style of scenery produced by it is very peculiar. In some places, where a deep and precipitous ravine had been hollowed out, and where subsequently human labour, or chance sowing had clothed the sides of it with trees, cypresses or chesnuts mixed with acacia (excellent for such a purpose by reason of the wonderfully rapid spreading and wide ramifications of its abundant roets),

the process of demolition had been stayed; and such nooks of dark greenery clothing the sides of the fantastically cut hollows, occurring like oases in the midst of this brown yet fertile landscape, have a picturesque character and effect entirely their own. Especially this was the case where such oases of verdure are combined with buildings of those picturesque forms and colours, which are so universally allied in Tuscan hill villages to entire absence of all adaptation to the needs of comfortable modern life, as to suggest the idea that the philanthropic and artistic constructors of these habitations must have planned and raised them wholly with a view to the production of the picturesque for the benefit of others, rather than with any reference to their own comfort.

Immediately beneath Palaia, a little hill-town about nine miles to the south-west of San Miniato, the scenery is strikingly pretty from the causes above mentioned. As usual, with all the smaller towns which were built at a period when the principal business of men's lives was to defend themselves against their neighbours, Palaia is placed on the top of a hill as high or higher than that of San Miniato. And the steep sides of this otherwise brown hill are deeply seamed by three ravines, which cut so sharply into it as to seem to have stopped themselves suddenly just in time to avoid swallowing up the town walls which stand at the edge of the precipices thus formed. And these ravines are well and richly clothed with an abundant growth of trees and underwood. Were they not so indeed, it is evident that Palaia would not much longer remain on the hill-top she has occupied for so many centuries.

Town walls, in truth, Palaia can hardly be said to possess, if by such a phrase is understood something separated from the dwellings they surround. The backs of the houses constitute the town wall. An ancient document remaining from the times when little Palaia, too, made laws for itself, exacts, that every house-owner using a portion of the town wall for the back of his house shall be bound to keep such portion in repair at his own cost.

Almost every householder seems to have availed himself of this advantage, and incurred this responsibility, inasmuch that my companion observed that the principle of defence adopted was simply that of a flock of sheep, who, at the approach of danger, put all their heads together in the middle, and turn the circumference, composed of their hinder quarters, to the foe.

Notwithstanding the additional consistency imparted to the mixed sand and marl, which form the material of the hill, by the growth of trees and brushwood, there are parts of the little townlet which appear to be by no means safe from the consequences of a further advance of the ravines at the head of which they stand. Doubtless the inhabitants comfort themselves with the reflection, that the stones which have remained in their places, one on the other, for so many centuries, will be likely to "last their time." But they might be warned that such consolation is sometimes illusory by what is even now taking place in the City of Volterra some twenty miles to the south of them. There the mountain on which the city stands is much higher, and the landslips, which

have occurred there on a very much larger scale than those which have happened near Palaia,—offer the most remarkable instance existing of phenomena of this class. A colossal gully is there slowly but surely advancing into the heart of the mountain; several buildings have been swallowed up within the last half century; and at this day a large convent, with its church, has been abandoned by its inmates, and stands desolate at the brink of the crumbling precipice, awaiting its doom.

The large and handsome church of St. Martin, standing a little out of the town of Palaia, appeared to me to be far from secure from a similar fate. True, the ravine, at the head of which it is most picturesquely placed, is wooded; while the "balze" at Volterra (as the fatal devouring landslip is there called), present a surface of material of scarcely more stable consistency than mud heaped up in a vertical precipice of many hundred feet in height. And for this reason St. Martin's Church at Palaia is only in danger, whereas the convent at Volterra is condemned to certain destruction at no distant day. But there are portions of the hill-side beneath the former church, where the exposed water-seamed surface of bare friable sand presents an appearance anything but reassuring.

St. Martin keeps his fine old church inhospitably locked, it is to be presumed, for lack of visitors. A *contadino* at a farm-house close by, we were told, had the key, which was very readily produced on application. But it was the key of a small side-door, and St. Martin's worthy janitor would by no means hear of our entering the temple entrusted to his keeping by any such undignified approach. He begged us to wait an instant, while he entered, and from within opened the great western doors for our illustrious excellencies. The huge doors were dragged wide open, and we and the streaming sunshine entered the great desolate-looking and damp-feeling nave together. The whole appearance of the inside of the building seemed to indicate that men and sunbeams were equally rare visitors. And if it *should* happen that on some rainy day St. Martin should see his church, with its huge timbered roof, its fine range of columns, its half-defaced and desolate-looking tombs, and its mildewed Madonnas, all slip away into the valley beneath, it may be believed that the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants of Palaia would not be much injured by the catastrophe. But a fine old monument of the architecture of the thirteenth century would be lost, and with it a notable instance of the use of the vulgar tongue in an inscription of that period. For around the capital of the second column on the left hand of our entering the church, may still be deciphered, "Andrea fu que mi fece . . . . anno MCCLX." "It was Andrew who built me, in the year 1260." This ingenuous Andrew fondly imagined that no further designation would be needed to identify him to posterity. But he has sunk into the limbo which holds the "brave men before Agamemnon." For the supposition which has been put forward, that this fine building is the work of no less a man than Andrea Pisano, who made the first of the bronze gates of the baptistery at Florence, is effectually contradicted by a comparison of the date above